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by

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ABSTRACT

In 1865, the philosopher and poet Edgar Quinet published his history of the French Revolution. It aroused brief but considerable controversy because of its unexpectedly harsh treatment of the Jacobins and the Terror and then slipped, along with most of Quinet's other works, into obscurity. Recent work of certain French historians has re-directed attention to Quinet and his writings and, in particular, to his view of the French Revolution and its effects upon subsequent French political history. Quinet argued that the Revolution consolidated rather than initiated social change, that the reforms it attempted to introduce lay in the political and spiritual realm. The principle of liberty was the animating spirit of the Revolution and of the modern world, argued Quinet. So long as it was upheld, the Revolution remained true to its course. With the Terror and the dictatorship of the Committee of Public Safety, individual freedoms were suppressed and the French reverted to that acquiescence before authority which had characterized them through the ancien régime and which continued to influence their political life far into the nineteenth century. Quinet

conceived of his work as a commentary upon the authoritarian regime of Napoleon III, its materialism and cynical manipulation of popular aspirations, as much as a history of past events. He belonged to a generation which sought instructive and universal truths in the study of history, and he continued to uphold the role of conscience and belief in historical interpretation long past the time when these had been displaced in the pursuit of a more "scientific" methodology. Quinet's message transcends the severity and unfashionableness which made it so little heeded in its own day insofar as it challenges dogmas and affirms a commitment to intellectual independence.

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INTRODUCTION

Edgar Quinet was an impassioned observer of the often turbulent political life of nineteenth century France. Throughout the whole of his long career, he never ceased to comment on events or to urge upon his countrymen a return to the political principles and responsibilities which, in his mind, constituted the Revolutionary heritage. Little remembered now, he was, in his own day, a ubiquitous and noteworthy figure and one not without influence. He has been recognized as an early and important advocate of secular education, a champion of nationalist causes, a defender of academic freedom, and a prophet who anticipated many of the political issues and crises of his day. All of his writings - they constitute a formidable array - served as vehicles for his political message but perhaps none so obviously or thoroughly as his history of the French Revolution. To examine the nature of that message and the extent to which it served the purposes of historical writing and of political debate is the object of this thesis. In this way, it is hoped, some measure might be gained of Quinet's place in the intellectual and political life of France.

It has frequently been observed that the historigraphy of the French Revolution offers much to the student of political opinion in nineteenth and twentieth century France. Attitudes towards the Revolution, towards the Girondins, the Jacobins, the Terror and Thermidor, have often served to

denote certain political loyalties and beliefs. Even now events nearly two hundred years past continue to generate, in France, intense and often acerbic debate, debate not confined to the academic community but extending beyond to those who see the Revolution as subsuming many of the issues that underlie contemporary political struggles: the clash of opposing economic interests, of state and citizen, of principle and expediency.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the legacy of the Revolution had still to be fiercely defended by its various heirs against the encroachments of the July Monarchy and the Roman Catholic Church. A regime which in 1830 appeared to its liberal supporters to promise fulfillment of revolutionary aspirations had by 1834 begun its retreat to a conservative, defensive position. Opposition once again found expression in the writing of history. Just as the liberals of the 1820s had made their oblique but effective attack upon the restoration government through the medium of historical writing, so too, did the republicans and socialists of the 1840s voice their hostility to Orleanism in the context of the past. Histories abounded which depicted the Revolution as an "annunciation" proclaiming the emergence and solidarity of "le peuple" and conferring upon the French the role of champions of liberty and nationalism.[1] An overlay of hyperbolic imagery and symbolism helped obscure

the political divisions that vaguely troubled this "lyrical dream"[2] and it was only the obtrusive reality of 1848 and 1851, of the June Days and Louis Napoleon's coup d'état, that caused historians of the Revolution to adopt a more subdued and reflective tone.

Thus it was in the midst of disappointment and recriminations that Quinet, in 1854, embarked upon his history of the Revolution, not so much with a view to illuminating that event as to understanding the whole of recent French history, which he thought characterized by the repeated failure of liberalism. Like many of his day, Quinet considered his role as an historian was to instruct, to raise political and moral consciousness. History, he believed, proceeded by discernible laws, laws which made events of the past relevant to the present and future and which established the enduring validity of historical precedents. It was a conviction which Quinet shared with many French Romantics of the 1820s and 1830s. To seek in history, truths which explain or resolve present turmoil, was a favourite intellectual pastime in a nation which had known so little calm since 1789.

Quinet's purpose in La Révolution, then, was to impart a fundamental "truth" he thought little understood or appreciated. Whereas all his earlier works had been directed at combatting individual "sophistries", those which

characterized educational or religious or political policy of his day, in La Révolution he claimed to be presenting the heart of all error, the "fatal submissiveness" of the French people. Quinet believed that the habit of submission to authority, long inculcated by the Roman Catholic Church, was evident throughout the history of France and most dramatically and disastrously so, in the latter stages of the Revolution. It was his hope that his work would re-awaken the "deadened conscience" of the French people, indicate to them the error into which they had fallen and still continued to fall, in their acceptance of Napoleon III and his spurious democracy, and so bring them to repudiate that "materialism" which was the result of the abandonment of principle.

Quinet's history, when it was published in 1865, aroused considerable comment but did not achieve lasting success. It was a two-volume work, just over six hundred pages, in format rather disjointed, in style, grandiloquent and polemical. It was neither as analytical as Tocqueville's L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution nor as inspiring as Michelet's Histoire de la Révolution française and was quickly eclipsed by "scientific" histories which displayed a greater degree of empiricism and specialization.

What made Quinet's history notable in its day was his attitude towards the Terror. In this, he departed from republican orthodoxy in declaring the Terror an aberration, a

departure from the true course of the Revolution and fatal to its objectives. The Terror was a disaster for France, not because of its ferocity or inhumanity but because, in bringing about a reversion to centralized government, it was the death of newly fledged liberty. The Revolution was a failure, he declared, because it succeeded in none of its principal objectives: the defeat of absolutism, the reform of religious institutions, and the dismantling of a central authority. Had the revolutionaries pursued a sincere and vigorous policy of religious reformation, Quinet argued, political reform might have been permanent. But in their reluctance to challenge the Roman Catholic Church in its grip upon the people, they allowed the long established habit ofsubmissiveness to re-assert itself and France once again sank into servitude before a master.

Quinet was attacked not only for straying from republican orthodoxy but also for preaching what many saw as religious intolerance. If his anti-Catholic sentiments did lead him into inconsistency and excess, he was not alone in considering the influence of a religious belief founded on the idea of received truth prejudicial to critical inquiry. More worthy of examination, though, is his political iconoclasm. It moved to outraged protest such members of the radical left as Louis Blanc and Alphonse Peyrat and alienated his long-time friend and former colleague, Jules Michelet,

but it also won him the praise of more moderate republicans, Jules Ferry and Gambetta. In 1886, Alphonse Aulard, in his opening lecture at the Sorbonne to students in the newly established course on Revolutionary history, pointed to Edgar Quinet as one who, in his attempt to "de-mythologize" the French Revolution, prepared the way for truly critical historical study:

> ... si ce cours est possible, s'il existe, c'est par ce qu'Edgar Quinet a écrit. Oui, son livre, digne de Montesquieu, inaugura vraiment la critique de la Révolution ... levant le voile mystérieux et légendaire, montrant dans la Révolution non plus un cataclysme amené par la Providence pour punir et récompenser, mais une oeuvre humaine![3]

The controversy which attended the publication of La Révolution was nothing new to its author. Impetuous and even self-absorbed, Quinet had, from his youth, followed a determinedly independent path. Well known to the French public as a literary and political figure, he had been identified with republicanism since the mid 1830s. His outspoken opposition to the "materialist", bourgeois regime of Louis-Philippe had culminated in a prolonged and much publicized conflict with the government and the Roman Catholic Church on the issue of clerical influence in education. A professor at the Collège de France from 1842 to 1845, he, with his colleagues Jules Michelet and Adam Mickiewicz, roused such feeling against the Jesuits and their perceived attack upon liberalism and national sovereignty

that the government began to feel its own position undermined. In 1845, the Minister of Public Instruction succeeded in removing Quinet from his position but could not dampen the rebellious mood which his teaching had inspired among his student auditors nor their outrage at this attack upon academic freedom. After the overthrow of the Orleanist regime in February, 1848, a revolution in which many see the effects of this controversy, Quinet was triumphantly re-instated in his Chair at the Collège de France.

Quinet continued in the role of political and social critic thereafter. He was actively involved in the political life of the Second and early Third Republics, being elected, in each case, a representative to the National Assembly. Identified with the radical republicans but not always in agreement with them, he remained a man apart, the voice of conscience, the opponent of compromise and expediency. He was exiled in 1851 after the coup d'état of Louis-Napoleon and remained abroad for almost twenty years, ignoring the amnesty of 1859 and resisting the entreaties of friends who had made uneasy peace with the Second Empire.

His stature as a political figure derives more from his ideas and principles than from any contribution to the practical work of politics yet he always insisted upon the necessity of action. It was, perhaps, this dual commitment to thought and to action which has made his name today at

once familiar and obscure. Much respected in the nineteenth century as a poet, philosopher, historian and journalist, he gained more widespread fame as a public figure, as a champion of academic freedom and as a political exile. Daniel Halévy, writing some thirty years after his death, commented, with some justice, that Quinet's greatest work was his life and speculated that in the melancholy which overtook Quinet in the final years of his exile there was a certain regret for the ephemeral nature of his achievement:

> Peut-être y eut-il dans cette émotion, non certes de l'ennui, mais un retour un peu mélancholique sur soi-même, une inquiétude pour les pauvres livres disparates qu'il laissait, un regret enfin pour sa popularité et sa gloire compromises parce qu'il avait donné la meilleure de ses peines, non à une oeuvre écrite, mais à une oeuvre vivante, c'est-à-dire, passagère: la pratique de la vertu, heroïsme.[4]

Certainly it is true that very soon after his death, his works ceased to be read and his memory, unlike that of his contemporaries Michelet and Victor Hugo, only perfunctorily celebrated.[5] Recently there have been efforts to revive, in France, Quinet's intellectual and literary reputation or at least to determine whether the obscurity into which his works have fallen is merited. Maurice Domino does not, as do Halévy and others, suggest that diversity and superficiality have made Quinet's works so little regarded but instead wonders whether conservative and clerical opinion have not conspired to cast a shroud over his writings:

> ... le nom d'Edgar Quinet a comme éclipsé son oeuvre. Ce sort étrange n'est pas unique: il a été, un temps, celui de Hugo, de Michelet et de quelques autres dont la célébrité patronymique dispensait de lire les textes. Mais il est plus net pour Quinet que pour aucun autre: tout se passe comme si les frontons des écoles, les plaques des rues ou les stations de métro avaient confisqué son nom aux couvertures des livres. Comme si la République, en honorant le nom d'un républicain gênant que la mort avait fait taire détournait l'attention de cette voix insistante qui passe dans son écriture.[6]

Domino is most interested in Quinet's literary works. He cites a number of critics, such as Raymond Schwab, Herbert Hunt and Léon Cellier, who have re-examined Quinet's verse and prose epics and discovered in them passages of striking beauty and lyricism, which, if insufficient to make them enduring works of art, at least establish their place in the evolution of the Romantic epic. Domino, himself, considers Quinet a "paradigm" of the Romantic writer, not because of his eminence as a poet but because of the grandiose philosophic vision, abundant imagination, and critical instinct which inspired and shaped all his literary works.[7] Pierre Albouy, who describes Quinet as the "poet of the philosophy of history", offers a similar assessment:

> Ce génie grandiose du romantisme, dans son ambition d'une vision synthétique de l'histoire, embrassant les temps et les espaces, c'est Edgar Quinet qui en dépit de son échec littéraire, le représente le mieux.[8]

The Romantic era is often linked with the discovery of History, with the systematic investigation of the past for

its relation to the present and future. Quinet does indeed exemplify this preoccupation. In almost all his writings, whether on politics, literature, or religion, an historical approach is the method by which he analyzes and seeks to understand. Though only three of his works, Les Révolutions d'Italie, Histoire de la Campagne de 1815, and La Révolution, might be deemed works of history, his skills as an historian are everywhere employed.

These, too, have been the subject of recent, though limited, inquiry. Jacques Godechot, in his historiographical study, Un Jury pour la Révolution, examines Quinet's La Révolution along with the works of thirteen other historians, including Michelet, Carlyle, Tocqueville, and Louis Blanc. Godechot focuses on the historical context of each work, in terms of its author's origins, education, political affiliation and career, and its purpose, method, and style, with the object of determining the extent to which such factors influenced analysis of the Revolution. For the most part, Godechot emphasizes the limitations which historical context imposes on the writing of history; his treatment of Quinet's work is unenthusiastic. He sees in its implied criticism of the Second Empire a response to personal setback, that is, Quinet's loss of his Chair at the Collège de France, and attributes Quinet's perception of a failed religious reformation to an anti-Catholicism arising from his

conflict with the Church. Godechot asserts that, like most of the historians with whom he is grouped, Quinet, a bourgeois, underrated the importance of economic motivation in history and so was blind to the seeds of modern industrial capitalism, and incipient class conflict.[9]

Though Godechot is correct to note the almost complete lack of economic analysis in Quinet's work, François Furet, another prominent French historian, has taken a more positive approach, and examined La Révolution for its own sake, seeking in it what is unique and enduring. He finds in Quinet's work a stress on political analysis neglected by other writers more intent upon describing social transformation. "Dans l'historiographie du sujet", he writes, "l'oeuvre de Quinet est à ma connaissance celle qui analyse le plus systématiquement l'aspect politique de la Révolution".[10] Because, Furet continues, Quinet believed society changed almost imperceptibly, of its own momentum, he did not, as did so many of his contemporaries, see the Revolution primarily as the "victory of a new society" but as the victory of a new poltical "pact", "fondé sur un nouveau rapport de l'homme au pouvoir, où le citoyen remplace le sujet, et la liberté l'autorité".[11] As one who has argued persuasively for the restoration, in historical inquiry, of "intellectual curiosity" unfettered by the requirements of ideology and political engagement, Furet

finds in Quinet's challenge to republican orthodoxy, instructive and timely comment. He introduces his work, Interpreting the French Revolution, with a quotation from Quinet's Critique de la Revolution:

> Let us set our souls free to revolutionise the Revolution and, above all, let us resolve never to accuse an impartial mind of insulting the Revolution. For the term 'insult to Religion' has been so abused that we shall strike it from our language, since nothing is to be more avoided than the style and cast of mind of a public prosecutor when they are brought into historical and philosophical criticism.[12]

Other historians, too, have examined Quinet's historical writings. Louis Trenard, the biographer of Salvandy, published in 1977 a short article on La Révolution; Jacques Pochon, whose 1975 dissertation on La Révolution remains the single, detailed study of this work,[13] has published a number of articles relating to Quinet's works and career. La Révolution was studied and translated into Italian in 1953 by the noted scholar Alessandro Galante Garrone, whose interest in Quinet grew out of resistance to Fascism.[14]

Garrone's translation is one of the few that have been made of any of Quinet's works and the only one in this century. This fact underscores one of the difficulties encountered by any student of Quinet: the inaccessibility of his works. Though three editions of his collected works were published in the nineteenth century - the first, by

Pagnerre, 1857-58, in ten volumes (an eleventh volume was published in 1860, containing works omitted, for fear of censorship, from the first printing); the second, by Germer-Baillière, 1877-83, in twenty-six volumes; and the third, "definitive" edition, by Hachette, n.d., in thirty volumes - these are not readily available, even in France. Only five of Quinet's works have been re-issued recently: new editions of Histoire de mes idées (1972), and Des Jésuites (1966) and Slatkine's reprint editions of L'Esprit nouveau (1973), Merlin l'enchanteur (1977), and Ahasvérus (1982). Quinet's published correspondence, edited and, in some instances, altered by his widow, Hermione Asaky, is incomplete and not entirely reliable. Many of Quinet's papers remain in private hands.[15] Secondary sources are also lacking: there is, for example, no recent or comprehensive biography. Charles-Louis Chassin's Edgar Quinet: Sa vie et son oeuvre (1859) covers only his life to 1857. Albert Valès, Edgar Quinet: Sa Vie et son oeuvre (1928[?]) is complete but dated and somewhat adulatory. Marcel du Pasquier, in Edgar Quinet en Suisse: Douze Années d'exil (1858 - 1870) (1959) deals only with Quinet's exile in Switzerland. Richard Powers' biography, Edgar Quinet: A Study in French Patriotism (1957), the only

major source in English, gives emphasis to the years before 1850.

The scarcity of sources may soon be remedied. Simone Bernard-Griffiths, surveying, in 1973, work in progress on Quinet, reported the preparation of new editions of Quinet's correspondence with his mother and with Jules Michelet.[16] Elsewhere, she makes mention of Slatkine's commitment to reprint the entire thirty volumes of Quinet's Oeuvres complètes.[17] Another valuable documentary source is soon to appear. Francois Furet has indicated his intention to edit and re-publish, with commentary, articles by Jules Ferry and Alphonse Peyrat written in response to La Révolution and Quinet's own reply, rich sources, in Furet's view, of contemporary political opinion.[18]

It would be misleading to suggest that this activity represents a burgeoning interest in Edgar Quinet or a restoration of his works to their rightful place. It would be equally wrong, however easy, given his long obscurity, to dismiss Quinet as an observer of little influence and limited sociological insight. More balanced, perhaps, is the view which sees him as a valuable index to, if not significant arbiter of political opinion in nineteenth century France. Study of his work as an historian supports such a view. La Révolution is to a great extent derivative.

What distinguished Quinet from others who engaged in debate about the Revolution and continues to make him worthy of study today, was his avoidance of a "party line", his aversion to any opinion raised to the level of dogma. To most radicals of the time, fraternité, common belief and purpose, was the foundation of national strength and greatness. To Quinet, liberté was the essential objective in political as in intellectual life. The response to Quinet's message in 1865 and since, reveals something of the currency, in France, of ideas of individual freedom and responsibility. His was often a solitary voice, in part, perhaps, because of its stridency but also it might be argued, because the principles he espoused found no favoured place in French political thought.

Footnotes to Introduction

[1]Alice Gérard, La Révolution française, mythes et interprétations (1789 - 1970) (Paris: Flammarion, 1970), p. 45.

[2]Ibid., p. 47.

[3]Quoted in Albert Valès, Edgar Quinet: Sa vie et son oeuvre (Paris: E. Aubin et Fils, 1928), p. 299.

[4]Daniel Halévy, "Michelet et Quinet", Cahiers de la quinzaine, 21e cah., 4e sér., 1903, p. 46.

[5]Gabriel Monod, "Le Centenaire d'Edgar Quinet", Revue historique, LXXXII (mai-août, 1903), 75-76.

[6]Maurice Domino, "Edgar Quinet: Être dans l'histoire, écrire l'histoire", in Les Genres et l'histoire, XVIIIe, XIXe siècles, I (Besançon: Centre de Recherches d'Histoire et Littérature au XVIIIe et au XIXe siècles, 1977), 361.

[7]Maurice Domino, "Religion et révolution chez Edgar Quinet", Romantisme et religion; Théologie des théologiens et théologie des ecrivains, Colloque, Metz, 20-22 oct., 1978 (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1980), p. 291.

[8]Pierre Albouy, Mythes et mythologies dans la littérature française (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1969), p. 78.

[9]Jacques Godechot, Un Jury pour la Révolution (Paris: Éditions Robert-Laffont, 1974), p. 139.

[10]François Furet, "La Révolution sans la Terreur? Le débat des historiens du XIXe siècle", Débat, no. 13 (1981), p. 46.

[11]Ibid., p. 45.

[12]Edgar Quinet, quoted in François Furet, Interpreting the French Revolution, trans. by Elborg Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. v.

[13]Jacques Pochon, "La Révolution par Edgar Quinet, 1865: étude sur l'oeuvre et l'accueil du public" (unpublished Thèse de 3e cycle, l'Université de Nice, 1975). I have been unable to consult this work.

[14]Gérard, La Révolution française, p. 91.

[15]Simone Bernard-Griffiths, "Le dossier Quinet", Romantisme, no. 5 (1973), pp. 128, 129.

[16]Ibid., p. 128.

[17]Simone Bernard-Griffiths, "Avant-propos", in Edgar Quinet, ce Juif errant. Actes du Colloque international de Clermont-Ferrand. Centenaire de la mort d'Edgar Quinet. Présentation de Simone Bernard-Griffiths et Paul Viallaneix. Clermont-Ferrant: Assoc. des Publications de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de Clermont-Ferrand, 1978, p. 7.

[18]Furet, "La Révolution sans la Terreur?", p. 51.

CHAPTER II

Edgar Quinet: Career and Intellectual Development

Quinet, reflecting in 1858 on his life and career, remarked that in his writings, as in his life, he had maintained a unity and consistency, a commitment to certain principles, which change and adversity had not weakened.[1] Certainly it is true that many of the themes developed in his historical and philosophical writings - civilization's advance defined by the liberation of the individual, the efficacy of human will, the necessity of reconciling the spiritual and the material - find expression also in his literary works. Ideas and concerns which first appear in his earliest published writings are still apparent, forty years later, in the works of his old age. Though diverse in form and content, almost all of Quinet's works are permeated by certain recurring ideas. In studying a single work, such as La Révolution, it is helpful to examine its relationship to the whole of his oeuvre, to note the philosophic premises and political preoccupations it shares with his other writings.

All through his life, Quinet sought that elusive goal of Romanticism, an essential truth, a single all embracing idea which would reconcile present and past, find unity in diversity, and bring order to chaos. The origins of this

philosophic quest have been described by Quinet himself in his highly regarded autobiographical essay, Histoire de mes idées. Quinet directs the reader, with what one might deem a remarkably modern insight, to an examination of those familial and environmental influences which impressed themselves upon his awakening intelligence. Just as science studies the merest living creatures in its earliest stages, he writes, to observe the development of mobility and instinct, so might an individual examine his own life "non pour publier sa propre apologie, mais pour se rendre compte de son existence, pour se découvrir soi-même dans sa nudité d'âme et d'esprit et dans son imperceptible origine!"[2]

Almost all who write of Quinet's life follow his lead and look to his unusually liberated childhood for an explanation of his fierce independence. In Histoire de mes idées, Quinet describes the freedom and solitude allowed him by long sojourns, in the summer, at Certines, his family's rural retreat in the marshlands of Bresse. Intimidated by a distant, unloving father, who left to his wife the education and care of their son, Quinet learned from his Calvinist mother, whom he describes as a mixture of gaiety and good sense, that religious sensibility and preoccupation with the spiritual that characterized his works. His earliest

teacher was a mathematics instructor, with whose family he boarded, in winter, in Bourg-en-Bresse. Quinet learned to read and write, he recounts, without benefit of any book, paper, pen, or ink. He traced his letters on a chalkboard or in the sand in the garden and once entrusted to an astonished servant a letter to his mother, written with a sharpened hemp match.[3] The carefree days of his early schooling were soon over, however, when it was discovered, in the course of an alarming call upon Quinet's mother, that the mathematics instructor was subject to fits of madness. In 1811, the family moved to the small village of Charolles, and Quinet's education continued intermittently at the village school when it was not in use as a storage depot for the provisioning of troops. His instructor there was a captain of a dragoon regiment who taught his pupils cavalry manoeuvres. Quinet's next teacher was a former priest, despised in the community but pitied by his mother, who engaged him in the hope of inspiring greater charity among her neighbours. Quinet describes him as the "best man in the world" but even at the age of nine realized that the instruction offered by this elderly ex-priest, deaf, a stammerer, ignorant of Latin, had its weaknesses. The only moments of sanity, writes Quinet, in this bizarre education

were those spent with his mother. Together they read the works of the great French dramatists and the philosophes.

The invasion of France in 1814 brought foreign troops to his village and his home and once again interrupted his studies. He was at this time, he claims, a complete barbarian, a "vandal", whose main recreation was ferocious mock battle with other children - indirect feints at the enemy soldiers. When Napoleon returned from Elba and began his triumphant march northwards, Quinet, like most of his countrymen, was bedazzled. Unlike others who remained fixed in hero-worship, however, he found a remedy against it, he states, in the wisdom of his parents and his own ardent love of independence. Quinet claims no special merit in thus overcoming the idolatry of his youth; his purpose, he states, in recounting it is to present his experience as a sort of metaphor for human growth:

> J'ai insisté sur cette histoire intérieure, parce qu'il me semble que beaucoup de nos contemporains y retrouveront la leur ...
> ... mon vrai bonheur, ma force est de retrouver en moi à chaque pas la bonne vieille nature humaine.[4]

With the Restoration and the return of peace, Quinet's education followed a more orthodox pattern. He attended a collège in Bourg for two years, where, he claims, he knew nothing but desolation and rebellion against what was to

him, a veritable imprisonment. In 1817, he entered the Collège de Lyon, where more sensitive teachers granted him almost complete freedom in his studies. No longer compelled to read the classics, he devoured them. He discovered in the past, he writes, resemblance to the present, and history became for him a source of living truths.[5] He pursued his studies in music. He was a poor violinist, he confesses, but the necessity of providing him with a secluded room for practice gave him the private haven he desired. He studied the Italian language on his own and attempted some verse on the subjects of love and his youthful adventures.

Still, it was not until after his return to Certines in the fall of 1820 and his rediscovery of the world of the imagination, which the empty and brooding countryside seemed to inspire, that Quinet began to entertain thoughts of a literary career. He sensed, at this time, he writes, an awakening in France, a sense of regeneration which he shared with his contemporaries:

> C'était plutôt une aveugle impatience de vivre, une attente fiévreuse, une sorte d'énivrement de la pensée renaissante, une soif effrénée de l'âme après le désert de l'Empire.[6]

If Quinet had doubts about his ability to be one of those "esprits solitaires" who would undertake "à leurs risques et périls de réveiller la foule assoupie",[7] his

family was thoroughly unconvinced. In November, 1820 he was sent, against his wishes, to Paris to sit for entrance examinations to the École Polytechnique, his father having decided upon a scientific education and military future for him. Quinet was not much relieved when his father relented and, at his sister-in-law's urging, agreed to let his son apprentice to a bank. After six months, Quinet rejected as dreary and unpromising, a career in commerce. A compromise was found in the law and in late 1821, he embarked upon a course of legal studies, which he did, in fact, complete, in 1824. By then, however, he had developed a serious interest in philosophy and literature, to which he applied himself diligently and to good effect.

He read voraciously the works of Machiavelli, Grotius, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Hume, Hobbes, and Mme. de Staël. In the last, especially, he found enduring wisdom and inspiration. Mme. de Staël and Chateaubriand, he wrote, were the only two figures of their day who offered guidance to a France seeking renewal and resolution of conflict: "l'un catholique, l'autre protestant, l'un tourné vers le Moyen Age, l'autre vers les régions incertaines de l'avenir."[8] Quinet was "dazzled" by Chateaubriand but not convinced; it was Mme. de Staël whom he followed.

Inevitably the excitement of intellectual society in Paris drew him away from the practical occupations his family urged upon him. At one point, his exasperated father refused any further financial support. Quinet was too far advanced on his own path to be deterred and with the modest success of his poem, Tablettes du Juif errant, published when he was only 21, he abandoned all endeavours but his chosen one.

In late 1824, Quinet embarked upon a translation of Herder's Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit. He was encouraged in this enterprise, and in an interest generally in German idealism, by Victor Cousin, to whom he was introduced in the spring of 1825. Cousin had another young protégé, Jules Michelet, who was similarly engaged in a work of translation, of Vico's Scienza Nuova. Brought together by common interests and literary aspirations, the two young men established a rapport that was to endure forty years and produce a remarkable parallelism in their opinions and works, their careers, and even their personal lives.

Quinet's translation of Herder's Ideen, which was accompanied by a long introductory essay, enjoyed considerable success and acclaim when it was published in

1827, winning favourable notice even from Goethe. The achievement, for one so young, was all the more remarkable for being based on an English translation of Herder's work and only revised with the benefit of the German text when Quinet's study of that language was sufficiently advanced to allow him to examine the original. Whatever the flaws of Quinet's translation, they remained imperceptible to his French readers. Knowledge of the German language and familiarity with contemporary German philosophy were still rare accomplishments in France. Quinet's translation, and later essays on German philosophy and literature, such as Essai sur les oeuvres de Herder (1827) and those collected in Allemagne et Italie (1838), had considerable influence in directing the attention of his countrymen to such philosophers as Herder, Schelling, Fichte, and Kant and to German scholarship generally. They also contributed indirectly to the "Teutomania" that Quinet himself came to disparage.[9]

Quinet's ambition at this time was to be a sort of cultural spokesman for Germany, an interpreter to the French of German ideas. In the winter of 1827, he wrote to his mother:

> Aujourd'hui tout le mouvement philosophique de la France consiste à étudier l'Allemagne; me voici donc

> en sentinelle perdue à ce poste. La plus grande chose qui se passe en ce moment en France, c'est l'influence des idées nouvelles originaires d'Allemagne. Nulle voie plus large ouverte à un individu que de se faire l'interprète de ce mouvement suprême.[10]

To that end, Quinet continued his education abroad. His translation of Herder gave him entrée to the University of Heidelberg and studies with, among others, the philologists Creuzer and Gorrës, whose examination of ancient civilizations and conclusions regarding their relatedness re-inforced Quinet's already pronounced inclination towards concepts of universality and organic growth. Their influence is reflected in a short but significant work of 1829, De l'Origine des dieux, the first of Quinet's many forays into the history and what might now be termed the sociology of religions.

He remained in Germany for two years, from 1827 to 1829. Immediately upon his return he prevailed upon well-placed friends to have him appointed to a government sponsored expedition to Greece, to review the state of its archaeological treasures and cultural conditions generally after the long war of independence. An account of his experiences was published in 1830 as La Grèce moderne et ses rapports avec l'antiquité. He returned to Germany and spent much of the next six years there, visiting often the family

of Minna Moré, whom he eventually married in 1834. Throughout this time he contributed numerous articles to the Revue des deux mondes, many of them now having to do with German politics, as he observed with growing distaste the abandonment of that serenity and emphasis on the spiritual which had first attracted him, for "action" and things material. The Rhineland, which he once saw as a fount of liberalism, under the tutelage of France, he now viewed with alarm as a seedbed of aggressive nationalism, in the thrall of Prussia.

Quinet's disenchantment with Germany owed much to his increasingly militant nationalism, a sentiment he shared with most republicans of the day. All nations have something to offer the rest of the world, he writes in "L'Allemagne et la Révolution": Italy has its free manners, its easy life, "le bonheur et l'exaltation des sens"; Germany, its domestic happiness, its religiosity; England, its commercial talents and aggressiveness. France, he maintains, has "l'instinct de la civilisation", "le culte du droit":

> Désintéressé et impérieux néanmoins, ce zèle de la justice fait l'unité morale de la France, donne un sens à son histoire et une âme au pays.[11]

For the government of France to suppress or deny this instinct, as he believed the July Monarchy to be doing, was

to evade the responsibilities of leadership. To resist this impulsion, as he believed Prussia to be doing, was to repudiate justice and liberty. Quinet's heightened sense of France's national purpose did not blind him to the cause of other peoples. He became a champion of nationalist movements in Europe - in Greece, Poland, Rumania, and above all, in Italy. In his youth, he had developed a passionate interest in the literature of the Italian Renaissance and long nurtured a desire to visit its birthplace.[12] In the winter of 1832-33, he journeyed to Italy,[13] fulfilling his boyhood desire and furthering his studies in Italian literature and history, which he later applied to lectures delivered at the Collège de France.

Quinet remained for a long time without a fixed occupation or definite future. He enjoyed the literary life and travel. His translation of Herder's Ideen established his intellectual reputation; his adventures in Greece added to it a touch of glamour and daring.[14] His attendance upon Gérando and Cousin and later Guizot, Cuvier and Mme. Récamier gained him the acquaintance of leading political and literary figures of the day - Benjamin Constant, Royer-Collard, Sainte-Beuve, Montalembert, Lacordaire, Tocqueville, Lamartine. He sought action and involvement

and was "inconsolable" when the Revolution of 1830 flared so briefly while he was in Strasbourg.

He was beginning to find his voice, however. By 1830, he had broken with Cousin and eclecticism. It was Cousin's offering of a basis for belief, Powers suggests, his enthusiasm, his charismatic personality, which first drew the impressionable Quinet into his coterie.[15] Eventually, Quinet grew restive under Cousin's too oppressive protection and disenchanted with what he came to consider a demoralizing and "opportunistic" philosophy. Eclecticism, Quinet wrote in 1831, was a compromise, "une éclatante résignation sur principes discordants", a sort of "diplomatie envers les théories" which appeared attractive only in the wake of prolonged political struggles which left France exhausted and discouraged.[16] The time had come, argued, to throw off the influence of German ideas. Their emphasis on peace and reconcilation, their acceptance of authority, particularly obvious in the ideas of Hegel, were destructive of the vigour which had been France's. Quinet's political views, too, became more radical. He grew impatient with the conservatism and complacency of the July Monarchy and broke with Guizot, moving into circles that included Armand Carrel, editor of the republican journal, Le

National, and the group which attached itself to the new liberal journal, La Revue des deux mondes.

Quinet's assertion of intellectual independence was reflected in the breadth of his written work, much of it provocative or unpopular. In addition to his philosophic and political writings, he published, at this time, the first and most successful of his major literary works, Ahasvérus (1833). Two subsequent epics in verse, Napoléon (1835) and Promethée (1836), were less well received, though once again, in Napoléon, Quinet contributed to an intellectual phenomenon he later came to repudiate, the Napoleonic legend. For all his dedication to the cause of liberty, Quinet long remained drawn to the spectacle of grandeur which Napoleon's career presented. He chose the Emperor as the subject of his epic not out of simple admiration - Quinet was troubled by the destructiveness of Napoleon's ambition, Cellier asserts[17] - but because he believed Napoleon represented, in popular imagination, the democratic age, just as Charlemagne had been the "héros" of the feudal age and Louis XIV, that of the monarchical age:

> Dans l'avenir de la France, les guerres de la Révolution et de l'Empire formeront les âges héroïques de la démocratie; et de la même manière que Charlemagne, à l'aurore de la féodalité, est devenu le héros de la poésie féodale, tout de même

> Napoléon deviendra le héros de la poésie populaire.[18]

The poem follows the rise and fall of Napoleon's career, through victory and defeat, and concludes with his exile on Saint-Helena but the epilogue betrays Quinet's ambivalence: it suggests that Napoleon served, in the end, a greater cause than his own, the awakening of democratic and national aspirations abroad.[19] By 1857, when the poem was republished in his collected works, Quinet had so modified his views that he looked with some chagrin upon his youthful naïveté; the life of Napoleon was not, after all, the stuff of enduring legend: "L'histoire s'est vengée de lui et de moi", he wrote, "en substituant ... à mon Napoléon, l'implacable vérité."[20]

Quinet produced also, at this time, works of literary history and criticism, Des Épopées françaises inédites du douzième siècle (1831), which generated some debate within academic circles for its assertion that the emergence of a French poetic tradition pre-dated, by three centuries, its accepted origins in the 15th century, and De l'Histoire de la poésie (1838), which dealt with the epic as a genre, from its classical origins through various national traditions. He entered into theological controversy with L'Examen de la "Vie de Jésus" (1838), an attack upon Strauss' recently

published life of Christ, which he condemned for its denial of spiritual values in its presentation of an "historic" Jesus so stripped of "mythic" qualities as to deny the greater reality of a compelling and inspiring personality. In 1840 and 1841, he challenged the government of Louis-Philippe in two essays, "1815 et 1830" and "Avertissement aux pays", criticizing the regime's "defeatism", its substitution of material goals for political ones, and its fostering of class division in the creation of a "pays légal" and a "pays illégal". The weakness of France, both within and abroad, will never be remedied, Quinet argued, so long as the bourgeoisie and proletariat remain at odds: "Bourgeois et prolétaires, vous êtes, quoi que vous en disiez, frères par l'origine et par trente années de batailles, soutenues ensemble pour la même cause."[21] Take up this cause once again, he argues: "... consentez à être ce que la nature vous a faits, le peuple de la démocratie par excellence".[22]

The very diversity of his endeavours, plus their limited financial return, eventually caused him, says Powers, some anxiety. Much of Quinet's income in these years derived from his journalistic writings. He was a frequent contributor to the Revue des deux mondes (many of

his works, complete or in extracts, were introduced in its pages) and wrote also for Le Siècle, Le Temps, Le National and various regional and political journals.[23] He wearied, however, of the constant pressure to produce and to satisfy editorial requirements and by the mid-thirties was actively seeking a university teaching position that offered greater security and, he hoped, independence. When two were offered him in 1838, one at Strasbourg, the other at Lyon, he accepted the latter to become (in 1839, after the completion of his doctorat) a professor in Foreign Literature, but his acceptance was reluctant and ungracious, according to Powers, because it necessitated a removal from Paris.[24]

Whatever his feelings, his performance as a teacher was much applauded, in Paris as in Lyon. His lectures were widely reported and later published as Le Génie des religions (1841). Salvandy, the Minister of Public Instruction, had appointed him to the position at Lyon despite the expressed misgivings of Louis-Philippe: "Vous faites là une belle nomination! Vous venez de nommer un républicain."[25] Now, Quinet's competence and political reliabilty accepted, Villemain, Salvandy's successor, created for him a Chair at the prestigious Collège de

France. There he joined his friend Michelet and from 1841 to 1845 they, along with the Polish poet and mystic, Adam Mickiewicz, led an increasingly radical reaction to clerical encroachments upon secondary education. Quinet interpreted broadly the title of his Chair, Southern European Literature and Language, declaring the importance of going beyond the study of particular individuals or works to the examination of "l'esprit" or "l'âme" of the culture which produced them. One begins with the study of religious belief and institutions, he constantly asserted, for these are at the heart of all other institutions:

> L'on se condamne à flotter toujours à la surface des choses, si l'on n'embrasse, une fois, dans une même vue, les révolutions religieuses, dont les institutions politiques, les littératures et les arts sont une conséquence.[26]

Thus, when the Church, whose battle with the university dated from the latter's inception in 1808 when it was granted control of secondary and higher education, including supervisory rights over private secondary institutions, grew more aggressive in its attack upon state education, Quinet felt himself justified in adapting his pedagogy to political purposes, that is, to the defeat of clericalism. Though his first course of lectures, those published as Révolutions d'Italie (1848-51), was relatively restrained, emphasizing

more the emergence of an Italian culture and "nation" in the 12th to 15th centuries than its supposed suppression thereafter at the hands of the Roman Catholic Church, his later courses were intemperate in the extreme. In 1843, Quinet and Michelet collaborated in an attack upon the Jesuits,[27] whose influence within the Church they associated with its increasingly retrograde and anti-liberal stance. Their lectures were interrupted by scuffles among their student auditors, so intense were feelings on both sides of the issue, and were even the occasion of a prolonged debate in the Chamber of Peers in April and May of 1844. At issue, in the beginning, was the state monopoly in education, attacked by Catholics as an infringement of basic freedoms. Quinet's and Michelet's lectures served to narrow the focus of debate: it deteriorated into a bitter controversy over the Jesuit presence in France, which only abated after Guizot obtained the co-operation of the Papacy in the voluntary reduction of the Jesuit order.[28]

Quinet returned from a prolonged holiday in Spain and Portugal in the winter of 1843-44, undeterred and even fortified.[29] In his lectures of 1844, on ultramontanism,[30] he once again attacked the Roman Catholic Church for its suppression of "modern revelation",

that is, science, and now also for its opposition to nationalism, which threatened its monolithic base. He accused the government of complicity with the clerical party and so alienated his one time admirer, Salvandy, recently re-appointed Minister of Public Instruction. Public debate on the issue of control of education had become, by this time, intense, even explosive. The inflammatory opinions and impassioned oratory of the trio at the Collège de France only exacerbated the situation. Quinet and Michelet, protected by the independent authority of the Collège, were beyond ministerial reach so long as they kept their lectures within the bounds suggested by their course titles. They had, moreover, the support of their colleagues. Mickiewicz, however, was more vulnerable. An ardent democrat and admirer of Napoleon, he allowed his political enthusiasms to carry him far beyond his intended subject, Slavic literature, and so made his appointment subject to government review. In May, 1844, he was dismissed.

Both Quinet and Michelet seemed to revel in their roles as activist-philosophers. In the face of authorities, Quinet carried on his attack upon Catholicism. In his final series of lectures at the Collège de France, published in 1845 as Le Christianisme et la Révolution française, he

stressed again the anti-modern, anti-liberal nature of the Church and related this to the diminution of the revolutionary impetus which was the true greatness of France. The governing body of the Collège de France, under pressure from the government, was finally persuaded to review his lectures in the summer of 1845, but declared them compatible with the approved title of his course, which Quinet had augmented with the word "Institutions". This Salvandy now deleted, with the intention of restricting Quinet to strictly literary topics. Quinet refused to submit to what he angrily deemed an attack upon academic freedom and, in early 1846, resigned his position, though not before publishing a public letter of protest which caused hundreds of students to march through the streets of Paris and assemble before Quinet's rooms in demonstration of their support. Quinet faded somewhat from the public scene, thereafter, but continued his attacks upon the government. He began, in 1846, Les Esclaves, a dramatization, in verse, of the doomed revolt of Spartacus and an oblique commentary upon contemporary France, and unsuccessfully ran as a republican candidate in the elections of that year.[31]

In the Revolution of 1848, Quinet once again returned to the forefront of action, literally, in fact, for Mme. Quinet reports that he was at the head of those who marched upon the Tuileries February 24. She also describes his participation in the tumultuous meetings which took place that day at the offices of Le National and La Réforme to select candidates for a provisional government and asserts that his name was advanced by at least one of the revolutionary leaders, Caussidière.[32] Quinet disclaimed any real political ambition but did seek public office. Reinstated to his position at the Collège de France on March 8, he nevertheless chose to forsake teaching for a more active role in the formation of the new republic. He named Alfred Dumesnil, Michelet's son-in-law, his substitute in the Chair of Southern European Literature and declared his candidacy for election to the Constituent Assembly. Elected a representative from l'Ain in April and re-elected the following year, he entered upon three years of dispiriting helplessness and isolation in a Chamber increasingly repressive and reactionary. As a colonel of the National Guard, charged with the defence of the Assembly, he helped to suppress the workers' rising in June, an insurrection he believed inspired by Bonapartists, but the wave of reaction

which followed distressed him. That, and the election in December of Louis-Napoleon as President of the Republic, strengthened his opposition to the government. His main political preoccupations throughout this period, according to Chassin, were the Italian question, the issue of religious education, and the threat of Bonapartism, which he perceived in a growing executive power.[33] He made a spirited but vain protest against the government's role in the defeat of the Roman republic, publishing in 1849 a pamphlet entitled "Croisade autrichienne, francaise, napolitaine, espagnole contre la république romaine". In 1850, he attempted to have passed an amendment to Falloux' education bill, which would have provided for "non-sectarian" moral and religious instruction at the primary level. Resistance to secular education was still strong, however; his treatise on the subject, L'Enseignement du peuple, which appeared in 1850, was denied inclusion in his Oeuvres complètes of 1858 as being too controversial.

Mme. Quinet insists that if Quinet was ineffectual as a politician, it was because his religious views made him something of a pariah. Whatever the cause, he was never, in the Chamber, the compelling figure he had been in the lecture hall. He made few speeches; he now preferred to

express his views in print. He did, however, consistently oppose, in the Assembly as in his writings, measures which increased the executive power and in the last days of the Republic attempted to rouse the remaining few who sided with him to an awareness of the imminent danger of "dictatorship".[34] He was sufficiently outspoken to earn a place on the list of proscrits published after the coup d'état of December 2, 1851. Anticipating his arrest, he fled to Brussels with the help of Hermione Asaky, widow of Prince Mourouzi of Moldavia and an "impassioned disciple" of Quinet since his days at the Collège de France.[35] There the two were married, in July, 1852, Quinet's first wife having died the year before.

In Brussels, Quinet lived modestly and quietly, ever careful not to provoke Belgian authorities, nervous already with the presence of so many enemies of a neighbouring government. He continued to write, finding in the history of the Netherlands and its religious reformation of the sixteenth century, further ammunition for his broadsides against the Roman Catholic Church. In addition to Fondation de la république des Provinces-Unies; Marnix de Ste. Aldegonde (1854), which recounts the exploits of the Dutch champion of national and religious freedom, he completed two

more literary works, Les Esclaves (1853) and Merlin l'enchanteur (1860). While still in Brussels, he conceived the idea of a work on the recent history of France which would uncover, he hoped, the causes of the repeated political disasters which had befallen her. He began with an introductory work, Philosophie de l'histoire de France, published in 1855 in the Revue des deux mondes, which stated his objections to what he considered a dangerous and predominant "fatalism" which justified all that had gone before on the basis of present or future benefit. By this means, he argued, men came to justify despotism and militarism, and to uphold force rather than liberty as an agent of progress.

Quinet examined more closely the glorification of military might and its consequences in Histoire de la campagne de 1815, which, though not published until 1861, grew out of an interest dating from his youth and rekindled by visits during his years in Belgium to the scene of Napoleon's last campaign.[36] He begins his account of Waterloo on the eve of battle, in mid-June, describing the military leaders, their general strategy, the disposition of forces, and the surrounding terrain. His review of the events of June 17 and 18 leads into his main argument, that

Napoleon was betrayed only by his own "genius", by his conviction that he was invincible, and not by the treachery of others or by mere tactical error. Only Napoleon himself was spared the consequences of his disastrous campaign. In exile, he cast himself as a champion of liberty, an image accepted and transposed by many to his days as Emperor. This accounts for the attempts to mythologize even his defeats but Quinet urges resistance to erroneous legend:

> La gloire de Napoléon est assez grande; ne la faisons pas surhumaine en louant ses désastres à l'égal de ses triomphes.[37]

Though his analysis still bears traces of the admiration he once evinced for Napoleon, in describing the almost irresistible force of the Emperor's ego and vision, Quinet applies himself to the task of challenging the legend which depicted Napoleon as the instrument of destiny. It was a myth which Napoleon himself nurtured and which served well the purpose of justifying Brumaire, he declares. But if the French of 1799, in the midst of foreign war and internal instability, might be forgiven their too ready acceptance of a self-proclaimed "saviour", how little can be excused the French of his own day who ought to have learned to resist the argument for force, he adds.[38]

Even as he considered the parallels between the coups d'état of brumaire and 2 décembre, Quinet was looking

further back to the Revolution and to what he considered the source of that abandonment of conscience which explained the appeal of Bonapartism. His work on La Révolution was not all that occupied him at this time. In 1857, a group of friends arranged for the publication of his collected works. His Oeuvres complètes appeared in 1858, but not without a delay to accommodate the hasty substitution of a new work, Histoire de mes idées, for certain pieces which Pagnerre, the editor, deemed too contentious for publication under Napoleon III.

Quinet's political radicalism caused him other difficulties. Fearing deportation at the hands of Belgian authorities, newly agitated by the recent Orsini plot, Quinet and his wife decided, in 1858, to move to Switzerland. There they remained for the next twelve years in the little town of Veytaux, "swallowed up", as Quinet wrote to a friend, [39] in obscurity and isolation. He continued to observe France from afar, publishing tracts critical of the foreign policy of Napoleon III, L'Expédition du Mexique (1862) and France et Italie (1867), and assessments of the political scene, still deeply pessimistic in La Mort de la conscience humaine (1867) but hopeful of change in Le Réveil d'un grand peuple (1869).[40] He continued, too, his more philosophical pursuits, finding

now in natural history the same outlet for his contemplative instincts that religious and political history once filled. He travelled frequently to Geneva and there made the acquaintance of several prominent members of the Swiss scientific community. From them, he learned of Darwin's researches and the debate on transformation of the species. His fascination with supposed parallels between natural and human history culminated in a work, published in 1870, entitled La Création, in which he adapted evolutionary theory to the explanation of linguistic and societal change.

Throughout his exile, Quinet maintained a steadfast resistance to all suggestions that he return to France and take up the practical work of active, if discreet, opposition to the regime. Like Victor Hugo, he declared his determination never to return so long as Napoleon III remained in power. He ignored the amnesty of 1859, which removed the proscriptions of 1851 and 1852, and refused the appeal addressed to him in 1864 by a group of liberal supporters urging his return. To the suggestion that he allow his name to stand as an opposition candidate in the elections of 1863 and 1869, he declared his insurmountable objection to the oath of loyalty to the Empire then required

of candidates. The fall of Napoleon III in early September of 1870 brought him hastening back to Paris, however, where he was received with great honour by the republicans of the provisional Government of National Defence. Once again, he was restored to his Chair at the Collège de France, though the appointment remained merely titular. He sought a return to active political life, despite ill-health brought on by privation suffered during the siege of Paris. In the election of a new National Assembly in February, 1871, Quinet's name was advanced as a candidate for Paris. His belief in the power of symbolic political action was vindicated by the gratifying response of the electorate. Out of a possible 328,970 votes, his name, symbol of 1848 and ardent republicanism, drew 199,472 votes; only Louis Blanc, Victor Hugo, Garibaldi, and Gambetta surpassed him.[41]

As a deputy, his success was less stunning. Seated with the extreme left in a Chamber dominated by monarchists, he was at odds not only with the majority but also with republican moderates who struggled to achieve a constitutional compromise that would ensure the survival of the Republic. He remained aloof from the insurrection of Paris in March, 1871 but deplored the harshness of the

repression which followed. His opposition to Thiers and his "corrupt" republicanism grew to the extent that he continued to advocate, with a dwindling number of intransigent leftists, the dissolution of the Assembly and the denial of its constituent powers.[42]

Quinet continued to write and to travel, within the limits imposed by declining health and meagre resources. He pursued controversy even to the end, waging a solitary battle against the constitutional laws proposed in 1875, seeing in their provision for a Senate and a strong executive, a threat to republicanism and democracy, an inroad for the forces of monarchism and Caesarism. In the end, to avoid a complete stalemate, he voted for the crucial Laboulaye and Wallon amendments and so supported the principle of a second Chamber and the "conservative republic" but this supposed betrayal of conscience disheartened him.[43] He died shortly after, in March, 1875.

In his creative and philosophic writings, Quinet displayed the same restlessness that marked much of his life. As he more than once observed, he was an "esprit de liberté". "Je ne consens pas à me laisser emprisonner par moi-même", he wrote to a friend:

> Lorsque j'ai achevé un ouvrage, ma nature me presse irrésistiblement à en produire un autre tout

> différent, ou opposé dans le fond, ou par la forme ... . J'ai horreur de la routine, de procédé ... .[44]

He delved into history and ethnology, the comparative study of religion and literature, linguistics, and natural science; he observed the contemporary political scene, in France and in Europe as a whole; he wrote in verse and in prose, producing an array of works that defy classification under any single heading. And yet, as he continued in this same letter, he believed himself to have maintained in his works "un grand fond d'unité".[45] Quinet could make such a claim because in the midst of this diversity certain themes remained constant. The intellectual influence and preoccupations of his youth endured through the whole of his life. He was only twenty-one when he wrote Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire de l'humanité but thirty-three years later, introducing it in his Oeuvres complètes, he claimed to see in it the germ of all his later writings:

> Je ne puis m'empêcher de voir que tout ce j'ai écrit depuis ce jour-là était renfermé dans cette première ébauche: la liberté conçue comme fondement et substance de l'histoire civile; l'ordre moral qui domine le chaos des événements; le règne de la conscience s'élevant au-dessus des règnes aveugles de la nature; l'humanité représentée et enveloppée en germe dans chaque homme; l'individu qui réfléchit les destinées de l'espèce; la perception confuse de l'humanité antérieure dans chaque homme qui vient au monde; toutes ces idées n'ont fait que s'affermir en moi, à mesure que j'ai vécu.[46]

Herder's philosophy of history had a profound and enduring influence on the young Quinet. He found in the writings of the German philosopher, "consolation" and "joy", a warmth and vitality, a moral force lacking in the more coldly rational ideas of other eighteenth century thinkers.[47] Quinet had for some time been drawn to contemplation of the history of humanity and of the development of the individual. During a winter's break from his legal studies, he wrote "Histoire de la conscience humaine et de la personnalité morale" and, soon after, "Institutions politiques dans leur rapports avec la religion"[48] works which were never published but which suggest an early interest in ideas he soon found developed and confirmed in the writings of Herder. However independent Quinet's original quest for meaning in history, the direction and tenor it assumed owe much to Herder. The notion that human history parallels natural history, that societies are "organisms" subject to the influence of environment, that is, to natural laws; the emphasis on facts and experience as a necessary basis for explanation supplanting theory derived from reason; the idea that the products of civilization - art, music, literature, religion, laws - are expressions of a particular sensibility, whether

individual or national, and, as such, to be celebrated as a unique apprehension of truth; the resulting antagonism towards conformity, assimilation, or conquest, to any attack upon the free development of a people; the interest in language, poetry, song, myth, religious symbols, in primitive art forms generally, as the purest and most spontaneous expressions of the soul as a people - these are all to be found in Herder and repeated in Quinet.[49]

Like Herder, too, Quinet developed his ideas on the history of humanity in a number of works, diverse in form and content. His Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire de l'humanité, though relatively short, offers the most comprehensive exposition of his philosophy. His Essai sur les oeuvres de Herder, written shortly after, complements and completes this early work. Later philosophical-religious writings, those developed from his lectures at Lyon and the Collège de France - Le Génie des religions, Les Jésuites, L'ultramontanisme, Le Christianisme et la Révolution française - and works of his exile and old age, Philosophie de l'histoire de France, La Création, and L'Esprit nouveau, build upon certain of his basic philosophic tenets. Quinet's philosophy of history is at the heart of many of his literary works, too, notably

Ahasvérus and Merlin l'Enchanteur, and influences the arguments and conclusions of his major historical work, La Révolution.

Quinet saw in history successive stages of enlightenment and liberation, related to the increasing fullness and role of the individual consciousness, the "moi". "L'histoire", he writes in Essai sur les oeuvres de Herder, "nous apparaissait tout entière comme une vaste et éternelle déduction du général au particulier":

> ... c'est le travail du moi qui se fait jour peu à peu, se dégage par degrés de ce qui lui est étranger, et aspire à se produire sous la forme la plus libre.[50]

In the earliest civilizations, in India and the Orient, man did not distinguish his existence from that of the cosmos: "Dans ce premier culte, embrassant tout, adorant tout, n'oubliant que lui-même, il a une cosmogonie, une théogonie, et point d'histoire."[51] Eventually, humanity "descended" from identification with the universe to an attachment to empire, as in the civilizations of Persia, Egypt, and Assyria. From the empire, man, by degrees, "fell back upon himself", though in classical Greece and Rome remained still "half-confused" with the city. With Christian civilization came a consciousness of self, but a

self encompassing the Infinite. Only centuries later, in the Reformation of Northern Europe, was the self divested of this Infinite and left solitary.[52]

Christianity was not necessarily the final stage in this evolution. Quinet here follows Lessing rather than Herder, citing the former's contention that revelation is continuous, that greater and higher truths are yet to be discovered:

> De même que la loi de Moïse renfermait implicitement la loi du Christ, celle-ci à son tour renferme de hautes vérités philosophiques, qui sont encore des mystères pour nous, jusqu'à ce que la raison vienne à les déduire de celles qui sont déjà en notre pouvoir.[53]

This march of civilizations, from east to west, each supplanting that which had gone before, might awaken a despair for the ephemeral nature of man's achievement, writes Quinet, were it not for the idea that in human history, as in natural history, change and diversity are rooted in a larger, unifying schema. When it is demonstrated that the vicissitudes of history are not the result of capricious will but born of the same causes which produce and shape the physical world, then stability and continuity can be discerned through the apparent transience of human institutions:

> Tout est bien, quand tout est conforme à sa loi; ce qui peut être produit, est produit; ce qui doit périr, périt. Les royaumes se brisent, mais la justice et la raison s'enrichissent de leurs débris et dominent leurs formes passagères.[54]

Greater justice, reason, and liberty are the goals towards which humanity slowly advances, argues Quinet. Without this reference to transcedent purpose or eternal truth, history is nothing but a "collection of forms", "pittoresque, dramatique, sans doute; mais la plus frêle, la plus variable, la plus précaire de toutes ... ."[55] He does not, however, accept the idea of ultimate ends exerting an irresistible pull upon historical development. Nor is he a materialist to the degree he believes Herder to be. Though he accepts that material factors influence the course of human development, that discoverable laws of cause and effect afford a basis for understanding human affairs, he insists upon the efficacy of human purpose and will:

> Outre ce ciel qui s'étend autour d'elle [humanité], outre ce monde physique qui l'enveloppe, il est un autre objet qu'elle contemple incessamment, il réagit sur elle d'une manière plus continue, plus immédiate; cet objet, c'est elle-même. Or, ce rapport réfléchi, cette attitude des peuples qui se prennent eux-mêmes pour objet de leurs pensées, à la fois acteurs et spectateurs, dans ce long monologue où l'univers reste muet, sont autant d'aspects auxquels Herder ne s'est point attaché.[56]

The dual influence of mind and matter, the need to reconcile the spiritual and the material, are constant

themes of Quinet's writings. His belief in the individual's capacity for heroic action leads him to challenge another of Herder's assertions, that man is and always has been only what time and circumstances permit him to be. If there is nothing inherent in man that distinguishes him from other beings, asks Quinet, what explanation can be given for humanity's discovery of self? Herder, writes Quinet, must fall back upon the notion of an initial revelation which sets man apart and frees him from the immobility to which natural forces condemn him. But, continues Quinet, to explain the phenomenon of liberation, no miracle is required: "Loin d'être une merveille dans l'humanité, cet acte d'émancipation n'a pas cessé; il se répétait hier; il se répète aujourd'hui."[57] History abounds with examples of rebellious human nature in conflict with the external universe:

> L'histoire, dans son commencement comme dans sa fin, est le spectacle de la liberté, la protestation du genre humain contre le monde qui l'enchaine, le triomphe de l'infini sur le fini, l'affranchissement de l'esprit, le règne de l'âme. Le jour où la liberté manquerait du monde serait celui où l'histoire s'arrêterait.[58]

The laws of history which Quinet develops, then, are not ones which deliver the individual of the need to act; rather, they insist upon it. He admires Herder's firm

commitment to moral principles, to a "théorie du devoir", more absolute than that of Kant, despite a materialism that in others has led to egoism, cynicism, or utilitarianism. In stressing ordered development while upholding the possibility of action, Quinet's view of history offers reassurance as well as moral instruction. The individual is not isolated; he is linked to humanity as the present is linked to the past. The same laws operate on the one as on the other:

> Ce que l'on affirme de l'un, on peut l'affirmer de l'autre; ils se reproduisent mutuellement, et soumis aux mêmes lois, ils présentent dans leur développement des phénomènes tout semblables. De cette unité nait la beauté harmonique de l'histoire, dans ses plus vastes proportions.[59]

It was a consoling philosophy, eminently suited to post-Revolutionary France, as Quinet recognized:

> Rien ne rassure alors comme le témoignage des siècles passés; rien ne calme dans la lutte, rien ne fortifie, rien ne cause une joie sainte, inépuisable comme de sentir protégé de l'autorité de tout le genre humain ... .[60]

Dominant among Quinet's ideas on the history of humanity was that which pertained to the influence of religious institutions. He was not unique in ascribing to religious belief a determining role in the formation of a particular culture and in the preparation for political and social renovation - Flint traces the idea back to Fichte,

Gorrës, Schelling, and Hegel - but he was, perhaps, the most thorough and convinced of its exponents.[61] It is an idea at the heart of a substantial portion of his writings. In De l'Origine des dieux and in Le Génie des religions, he states his belief that the essence of a people, a nation, is to be found in its religion, and that history is, therefore, the account of successive revelations. Society was first constituted on the basis of a concept of Divinity communicated by some inspired prophet:

> Autour du fétiche s'est assemblée la tribu, un Dieu national a enfanté la nation; l'unité religieuse a fondé l'unité politique, et de l'idée de Dieu est sortie la société toute vivante.[62]

Religions are distinquished by concepts of Divinity influenced variously by the natural environment - topography, vegetation, animal life, climate - but each is to be examined seriously and with respect for evidence of enduring truth:

> Dans ce pèlerinage à travers les cultes du passé, errant d'autel en autel, nous n'irons pas, infatués de la supériorité moderne, nous railler de la misère des dieux abandonnés; au contraire, nous demanderons aux vides sanctuaires s'ils n'ont pas renfermé un écho de la parole de vie; nous chercherons dans cette poussière divine s'il ne reste pas quelque débris de vérité, de révélation universelle.[63]

The major part of Le Génie des religions is devoted to an examination of the religions of the ancient world, of

China, India, Persia, Egypt, Babylon, Phoenicia, Judea, Greece and Rome, with a view to demonstrating how in each civilization, political and cultural forms derived from religious concepts. Pantheism in the Orient, for example, produced theocracy and an architecture devoid of human representation; the deification of human traits, in Greece, led to aristocracy in political life and in art, the refinement of the sculpted human form; the exaltation of ancient kings and tyrants in place of nature or man, around the time of Alexander, influenced Rome, says Quinet, producing despotism on earth as in the heavens and art forms which celebrated imperial triumphs.[64]

In Le Christianisme et la Révolution française, Quinet continued his history of religion, dealing with Christianity from its inception to the time of the French Revolution. He traces again what he considers to be the influence of religious concepts or practices on political institutions: the divinity of Christ and its corollary, the dual nature of God, echo in the division between temporal and spiritual domains in feudalism; Saint Augustine's articulation of the doctrine of predestination and its teaching of acquiescence to authority and hierarchy; the response of the Church to the Reformation, its erosion of the power of the episcopacy

and the strengthening of the Papacy through mendicant orders, and the influence of this development on the rise of "national" monarchs and their struggles with parliaments or communes. Quinet expands, also, his idea of continuing revelation in presenting the Revolution as the embodiment of a new creed. He sees in it the expression of individual conscience and commitment to principles of justice and fraternity, principles which had once been at the heart of Christianity but which had been lost in the increasing identification of the Church with the Papacy and with Rome. Quinet introduces, in this context, a theme that was to re-appear in La Révolution, that this spiritual revolution remained incomplete and unrealized in any enduring form, that the revolutionaries permitted existing religious institutions to survive and so challenge the work of the Revolution and failed to withstand the Church's legacy of centralization and repression, a legacy manifest in the Terror.

Les Jésuites and l'Ultramontanisme are extended asides in Quinet's general history of religions. They treat in greater detail the efforts of the Roman Catholic Church, after the Council of Trent, to counteract the forces of nationalism and regionalism and the effects of new scientific knowledge and Enlightenment philosophy. Here

again, Quinet's theme is the influence, and in this instance he believes it to be nefarious, of religious institutions on political and cultural life.

In his last years, Quinet produced two further statements of his philosophy of history. In La Création, he sought to establish the overriding unity of the natural world and to demonstrate that just as laws of nature provide a key to systematic study of man and society so, too, do laws of history, derived from human experience, suggest parallels in natural history and the evolution (or transformation) of other species. Stebbins, in his study of French reactions to Darwinism, cites Quinet's work as an "outstanding example" of an attempt, using transformist ideas and findings, to understand the whole of the universe. He quotes Quinet's statement of his purpose:

> The idea came to me that if the history of nature clarifies the history of man, reciprocally the history of man can clarify the history of nature, since, after all, the one and the other are part of the same whole. The same law ought to preside at the development of both.[65]

Thus, Quinet accepted the principle of natural selection, not because he was persuaded by Darwin but because he saw evidence of such a mechanism in human history. Conversely, he applied evolutionary theory to the development of language and of nations. Few regard Quinet's

arguments as wholly successful. Carbonell, for example, points out that Quinet's philosophic assumptions guided his choice of data and of theories to which they lent support.[66] Carbonell sees as noteworthy, however, the attempts by an historian to address philosophic questions at a time when philosophy and history had become widely divergent in their purposes and methods:

> L'exception d'un Quinet, vieil homme n'ayant jamais renoncé à réfléchir sur l'histoire, survivant de l'âge romantique égaré en plein 'positivisme', n'éclaire que mieux l'écrasant décalage qui existe entre le philosophe qui ignore le métier d'historien et l'historien qui juge inaccessible et vaine la recherche de l'intelligence totale de l'histoire.[67]

L'Esprit nouveau, published in 1875, the year of Quinet's death, was a restatement of his belief that in the reconciliation of the spiritual and material lay the necessary antidote to mysticism and obscurantism on the one hand, doubt and spiritual impoverishment on the other. Ideas that came to him in his youth, in a time of disillusion, and which have sustained him since, he writes, he offers again in a time when cherished beliefs, political and religious, are undergoing attack.[68] Written with reference to France's recent defeat at the hands of Germany and the prevailing perception of her "decadence" or decline, l'Esprit nouveau was an attempt to demonstrate, once again,

the harmony of the universe in the parallels between human and natural history.

Quinet's literary works, also, reveal his predilection for philosophic reflection upon human history and his fascination with myth, legend, and religious symbolism. Ahasvérus, for example, adapts the myth of the Wandering Jew to the theme of humanity's fitful advance. Merlin l'enchanteur aspires to bring together, in the Arthurian legend, all legends, all "popular and national traditions", all "mondes discordants que l'imagination des peuples a enfantés".[69] The humanitarian epic, of which these and others of Quinet's literary works are important examples, is a genre particularly representative of the Romantic temper, displaying, as it does, not only the rich imagery of myth and legend but also a preoccupation with history and metaphysics. The humanitarian epic represented a desire to celebrate humanity, its self-discovery and growth, to ponder its beginnings and its future, to render, in poetic form, the ambitious ideas of a progressive philosophy of history. Quinet was among its most ardent devotees.[70]

Philosophie de l'histoire de France offers further insight into Quinet's views on history. Intended as an introduction to La Révolution, it anticipates many of the themes of the latter work. Quinet takes issue with certain

contemporary historians who, he claims, in their treatment of French history have allowed their too confident assumption of progress, their triumph at the establishment of parliamentary government, to colour their interpretation of the past:

> Le passé national a intéressé davantage à mesure qu'on a cru y voir le germe d'un nouvel état libre ... pour traverser ces rudes commencements, on était soutenu par la pensée du but que l'on croyait atteint. La liberté conquise prêtait sa vie même aux temps auxquels elle avait le plus manqué. Sous l'arbre des druides comme sous l'arbre de Saint-Louis, on faisait remonter un reflet de nos jours.[71]

Quinet cannot accept the suspension of absolute moral values; conquest and repression cannot be justified on the basis of any supposed preparation for later liberty. Thus, he takes issue with Ranke and Thierry, who, he asserts, viewed with equanimity the Frankish conquest of the Gauls because "les Gaulois étaient incapables d'entrer jamais de leur plein gré dans la civilisation."[72] He decries Théophile Lavallée's suggestion that the civilization of the Midi which flourished in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries represented a "premature" quest for liberty which jeopardized the unfolding order and that its suppression, therefore, was not to be regretted. He cites Thierry again, along with Guizot, Louis Blanc, and Buchez and Roux as ones who defended the rise of centralized authority, at the

expense of the power of the Estates-General, on the grounds that it contained within it the seeds of the modern liberal state.[73]

Quinet emphasizes not only the role of conscience in historical interpretation but also that of imagination or intuition. He laments the failure of most historians to consult personal testimony, material related to individual lives and feelings, and the tendency, instead, to seek a lesser reality in laws and ordinances, the detritus of the state:

> Nous voilà, dès l'entrée, dupes de toute écriture scellée; le moindre parchemin a pour nous force d'évangile; nous y croyons plus qu'à la réalité; l'encre brille plus à nos yeux que le sang et les pleurs des peuples; nous prenons pour la vie nationale l'ordre administratif.[74]

A mechanistic view of history, which omits from its consideration the human soul, teaches disregard of spiritual values, of liberty, Quinet continues. It contributes to an attitude of resignation and resistance to change, an attitude manifest in the resistance of the French to the Reformation and their acquiescence in the persecution of the Protestants. Quinet deplores the complacency and egoism of these historians. Why, he asks, are they so determined to deny the errors of the French, to avoid the conclusion that the French have not always well served the cause of liberty and reform:

> ... nous faisons de la nation française un personnage classique, uniforme, qui ne tient rien de la mobilité qu'on trouve chez toutes les autres. Est-ce là verité? Ce peuple ne participe-t-il pas de la nature humaine? N'a-t-il pas ses égarements, ses incertitudes, ses retraites précipitées, ses peurs, ses épouvantes? Je voudrais le voir tantôt fidèle, tantôt ingrat, souvent aveugle, marchant au hasard, reculant, fuyant même sa mission.[75]

Quinet concludes Philosophie de l'histoire de France with the assertion that the fatalism which had impaired judgement of France's distant past is to be found even more destructive of logic and moral principles when applied to the history of the Revolution. It is a theme he develops at length in La Révolution.

Footnotes to Chapter II

[1]Edgar Quinet, Histoire de mes idées; Autobiographie (Paris: Flammarion, 1972), p. 36.

[2]Ibid., p. 44.

[3]Ibid., p. 60.

[4]Ibid., p. 141.

[5]Ibid., p. 154.

[6]Ibid., p. 178.

[7]Ibid., p. 181.

[8]Ibid., p. 180.

[9]André Monchoux, L'Allemagne devant les lettres françaises de 1814 a 1835 (Toulouse: Imprimerie Fournie, 1953), p. 92.

[10]Quoted by Jean-Louis Dumas, "Quinet et la philosophie allemande de l'histoire", Revue de la litterature comparée, no. 3 (juillet-septembre, 1973), p. 392.

[11]Edgar Quinet, "L'Allemagne et la Révolution", in Allemagne et Italie, Oeuvres complètes, VI (Paris: Pagnerre, 1858), 157.

[12]Simone Bernard-Griffiths, Editor's note, in Histoire de mes idées, p. 163.

[13]His impressions of Italian society, art, architecture, and landscape gained on this trip form the basis of the section on Italy in De l'Allemagne et Italie.

[14]Halévy, "Michelet et Quinet", p. 37.

[15]Richard Howard Powers, Edgar Quinet: A Study in French Patriotism (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1957), p. 113.

[16]Edgar Quinet, "De la Révolution et de la philosophie", Revue des deux mondes, IV (1831) (Reprint edition; Nedeln, Lichtenstein: Klaus Reprint, 1969), 469.

[17]Léon Cellier, L'Epopée humanitaire et les grands mythes romantiques (Paris: Société d'édition d'enseignement supérieur, 1971), p. 159.

[18]Edgar Quinet, Napoléon, in Oeuvres complètes, VIII (Paris: Pagnerre, 1858), 158.

[19]Cellier, L'Epopée humanitaire, p. 159.

[20]Quinet, Napoléon, p. 139.

[21]Edgar Quinet, "Avertissement au pays" in Oeuvres complètes, X (Paris: Pagnerre, 1858), 51.

[22]Ibid., p. 52.

[23]Centenaire du décès d'Edgar Quinet, 1875 - 1975; Hommage de sa ville natale, Catalogue de l'exposition; Chronologie-Bibliographie (Bourg-en-Bresse, 1975), p. 141.

[24]Powers, Edgar Quinet, pp. 74-90, passim.

[25]Quoted in Louis Trenard, Salvandy en son temps, 1795 - 1856 (Lille: Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de l'Université de Lille, 1968), p. 449.

[26]Edgar Quinet, Le Christianisme et la Révolution française, in Oeuvres complètes, I (Paris: Pagnerre, 1858), 15.

[27]Published as Les Jésuites (1843).

[28]Douglas Thomas Nelson, "Academic Freedom and Subversion: Jules Michelet and Edgar Quinet, 1838 - 1852", unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1975, p. 101.

[29]His travels on this occasion inspired another study of a people, the Spanish, their history and contemporary society, published as Mes Vacances en Espagne (1846).

[30]Published as L'Ultramontanisme ou l'Église romaine et la société moderne (1844).

[31]Domino, "Edgar Quinet", p. 353.

[32]Mme. Edgar Quinet, Edgar Quinet avant l'exil (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1887), p. 411.

[33]Charles Louis Chassin, Edgar Quinet: sa vie et son oeuvre (Paris: Pagnerre, 1859), p. 68.

[34]Ibid., p. 70.

[35]Simone Bernard-Griffiths, "Introduction", in Histoire de mes idées, p. 43.

[36]Valès, Edgar Quinet, p. 278. Valès also reveals that Buloz, the editor of the Revue des deux mondes, had received the first part of the manuscript in 1858 but only published it, after much hesitation, in 1861. It appeared, in installments, in the fall issues of the Revue des deux mondes and was published simultaneously in book form by Michel Lévy frères.

[37]Edgar Quinet, "La Campagne de 1815", Revue des deux mondes, XXXV (septembre-octobre, 1861), 565.

[38]Quinet, "La Campagne de 1815", Revue des deux mondes, XXXIV (juillet-août, 1861), 839.

[39]Marcel du Pasquier, Edgar Quinet en Suisse: Douze années d'exil, (1858-1870) (Neuchâtel: À la Baconnière, 1959), p. 38.

[40]Domino, "Edgar Quinet", pp. 357-58.

[41]Jacques Pochon, "La Carrière politique d'Edgar Quinet dans l'Ain (1846 - 1871)", Visages de l'Ain, XXIX, no. 145 (1976), 42.

[42]Raymond Huard, "De la commune à la fondation de la république; Une démarche républicaine: Edgar Quinet à l'Assemblée de Versailles (1871 - 1875)", in Edgar Quinet; Ce Juif errant. Actes du Colloque international de Clermont-Ferrand. Centenaire de la mort d'Edgar Quinet, présentation de Simone Bernard-Griffiths et Paul Viallaneix (Clermont-Ferrand: Assoc. des Publications de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de Clermont-Ferrand, 1978), p. 115.

[43]Ibid., p. 116.

[44]Quoted in Du Pasquier, Edgar Quinet, p. 103.

[45]Ibid.

[46]Edgar Quinet, Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire de l'humanité, in Oeuvres complètes, II (Paris: Pagnerre, 1858), 346.

[47]Ibid., p. 379.

[48]Chassin, Edgar Quinet, p. 26.

[49]Discussion of Herder's philosophy of history based on Isaiah Berlin, Vico and Herder; Two Studies in the History of Ideas (London: The Hogarth Press, 1976), pp. 145-216, passim.

[50]Edgar Quinet, Essai sur les oeuvres de Herder, in Oeuvres complètes, II (Paris: Pagnerre, 1858) 400.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Ibid., pp. 400-01.

[53]Quinet, Introduction, p. 375.

[54]Ibid., p. 369.

[55]Ibid., p. 351.

[56]Quinet, Essai, p. 410.

[57]Quinet, Introduction, p. 365.

[58]Ibid., p. 366.

[59]Ibid., pp. 384-85.

[60]Ibid., pp. 389-90.

[61]Robert Flint, The Philosophy of History in France and Germany (Reprint of 1874 edition; Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1971), p. 303.

[62]Quoted in Chassin, Edgar Quinet, p. 274.

[63]Quoted in D. G. Charlton, Secular Religions in France, 1815 - 1870 (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 138.

[64]Chassin, Edgar Quinet, pp. 277-80, passim. Chassin's summaries of Le Génie des religions, Le Christianisme et la Révolution française, Les Jésuites, and L'Ultramontanisme are major sources for the discussion of these works.

[65]Quoted in Robert Ernest Stebbins, "French Reactions to Darwin, 1859 - 1882", Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1977, p. 91.

[66]Charles-Olivier Carbonell, Histoire et historiens: une mutation idéologique des historiens française, 1865 - 1885 (Toulouse: Privat, 1976), p. 154.

[67]Ibid., p. 157.

[68]Edgar Quinet, L'Esprit nouveau (Reprint edition; Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1973), p. 4.

[69]Cellier, L'Epopée humanitaire, p. 169.

[70]Discussion of humanitarian epic based on Cellier, L'Epopée humanitaire, and Herbert Hunt, The Epic in Nineteenth Century France; A Study in Heroic and Humanitarian Poetry from 'Les Martyrs' to 'Les Siècles morts' (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1941)

[71]Edgar Quinet, Philosophie de l'histoire de France, in Oeuvres complètes, III (Paris: Pagnerre, 1858), 360.

[72]Ibid., p. 369.

[73]Ibid., p. 379.

[74]Ibid., pp. 385-86.

[75]Ibid., p. 403.

CHAPTER III

"La Revolution" as History

At the end of 1861, Quinet returned to the work and themes from which ill-health, the move to Switzerland, and the publication of his Oeuvres complètes had diverted him. Begun in 1854, La Révolution was largely complete when, in 1863, Quinet received from the family of Marc-Antoine Baudot, certain of the personal papers promised to him by the dying conventionnel in 1838. Quinet had first met Baudot as a child in his parents' home in Charolles, to which the somewhat mysterious but charming doctor was a frequent visitor. Though by tacit agreement Baudot's past was never spoken of, Quinet knew him to be a former Montagnard, a colleague of Saint-Just, a Terroriste, and came to wonder that a man whose deeds were apparently unspeakable should be so humane and genial.[1] The impressionable boy grew into an admiring young man whose eager interest, when their acquaintance was renewed after 1830, inspired Baudot's bequest.[2]

Quinet professed to set great store by Baudot's notes; they offered not only new facts and observations, he wrote, but "un point vivant" from which to view and judge theoretical "systems" invented after the fact.[3] The influence of Baudot's memoirs reveals itself most obviously

in Quinet's treatment of the Robespierristes, the representatives on mission, the revolutionary army, the policy of dechristianization, and the Jacobins in defeat and exile. Baudot was a representative on mission to the armies of the east, to the army of the Pyrenées, from November, 1792 to April, 1793, and to the army of the Rhine, from November, 1793 to March, 1794. After serving briefly as secretary to the Convention, he went again on mission to the army after Thermidor until he fell from favour with the new regime and drifted into obscurity. As one who voted for the death of the King, he was exiled in late 1815 and lived in Belgium until the government of Louis-Philippe granted amnesty to the regicides fifteen years later.

Baudot was in a position to observe closely the principal figures in the Convention and the events of Thermidor. That his judgements are sound and disinterested, however, is questionable. He was a Jacobin, a radical, a deist, and a Dantonist - the latter two attributes undoubtedly outweighing, for Quinet, any reservations the former two might have awakened in him - and, by reliable account, irresponsible and power-seeking. His excesses as a representative on mission earned him the enmity of the people of Strasbourg and the contemptuous opposition of

Saint-Just, whose efforts to organize the army of the east Baudot and his colleague, Lacoste, jeopardized with their unruliness. Self-justification marred Baudot's account of military reorganization just as political partisanship coloured his portrayal of Saint-Just and Robespierre.[4]

Apart from lack of objectivity, another source of unreliability arises from the provenance of the notes. Henri Monin provides a more complete version of the circumstances attending Quinet's receipt of Baudot's manuscript than does Quinet. Surmising that the "bequest" was verbal and so not legally binding, Monin suggests that Baudot's family acceded reluctantly and only partially to Quinet's repeated request for the documents. Mindful of the current regime, reluctant to bring down upon themselves the opprobrium they thought would come with public notice of their relative, they withheld from Quinet, Monin speculates, the draft of a more comprehensive and coherent work and sent instead some of Baudot's working notes, sketchy and disorganized as they were, in the hope that these would honour a commitment without threat to themselves.[5] Whatever their deficiencies, Quinet made good use of the notes, often quoting them at length and letting Baudot's observations guide his own. They probably injected some

vitality into an enterprise made difficult by a paucity of sources and a retreading of old ground, and one suspects that Quinet's confidence in their worth owed as much to a writer's gratitude as to an historian's judgement.

Apart from Baudot, Quinet acknowledges few sources for his history, merely stating his assumption that these will be obvious to the well informed reader. He makes reference, in the text, to the works of Tocqueville, Jean Reynaud, and Buchez, the memoirs of Mirabeau, de Molleville, Garat, and Mme. Roland, and the recollections of Carnot, preserved by his grandson. He acknowledges the influence of the writings of Mme. de Staël and her father, Necker, and takes issue with certain "socialist" historians, likely Blanc. He consulted Le Moniteur and the documents compiled by Buchez and Roux but, as Jacques Godechot points out, his research was necessarily limited to those printed sources available in the libraries of Brussels and Geneva.[6]

Quinet's purpose was not to examine or amplify the record of events but to interpret those events, to discover why the Revolution failed, for he, unlike so many others, sees more its failures than its triumphs:

> D'autres ont eu à raconter les triomphes qu'ils croyaient définitifs, les enthousiasmes, les droits, les conquêtes politiques et morales. Venu plus tard, je n'ai eu en partage que les revers, les

> chutes, les defaites, les reniements. C'est cette face des choses surtout que je suis condamne a expliquer.[7]

Thus his history is relatively short - two volumes - compared with the seven volumes of Michelet's Histoire de la Révolution française or the twelve volumes of Louis Blanc's Histoire de la Révolution. It consists of twenty-four "books", each dealing with a particular theme or event. It begins with the aspirations ("Les voeux") of the French people on the eve of the Revolution and the familiar events of 1789, the meeting of the Estates-General and the popular risings in July and October. It describes the civil, religious, and constitutional reforms of the Constituent Assembly, the successive stages in the slow but inexorable progress towards a republic, the conflict between Girondins and Jacobins and the significance of the Jacobin victory, the work of the Convention, the religious policy of the Jacobins, the "theory" of the Terror, the revolutionary army and the conduct of war, and the fall of Robespierre. It goes on to the Thermidorean reaction, the period of the Directory, and the coup d'état of 18 brumaire and concludes with a final section, "Société née de la Révolution". The text combines narrative and commentary but factual detail is minimal and secondary to the presentation of opinion and

argument. Quinet referred to his work as a "philosophy" of the Revolution;[8] it is history filtered through certain premises, history distilled to certain themes.

Quinet does not begin his work with a conventional recitation of events leading up to the outbreak of revolution; rather he discusses the state of mind of the initial protagonists. Louis XVI, he depicts as well-intentioned but oblivious, mild in his response to the demands of the parlements, complacent in his belief that the convocation of the Estates-General posed no threat to a monarchical absolutism of such long standing. The King aroused hopes and expectations he could not contain. He, and his reinstated finance minister, Necker, erred too, in thinking fiscal reform would suffice to appease the Third Estate. They made the mistake, says Quinet, all those do who consider only economic factors in human motivation, who think only of figures:

> L'espèce humaine est trop complexe, elle est mêlée de trop d'éléments divers pour que l'arithmétique seule suffise à expliquer ou à prevoir sa marche ...
> .....
> Si l'on voulait expliquer les révolutions humaines par la seule économie politique, il faudrait se figurer que les grands faits de l'humanité se sont accomplis dans la seule atmosphère de la richesse, de la production matérielle. On se ferait une idée fausse de presque toutes choses.[9]

The people were roused from somnolence by the news of the convocation of the Estates-General and passed almost overnight from resignation to impatient hopefulness:

> ... quand la nouvelle de la convocation des états généraux tomba au milieu de ce monde enseveli, ce fut un miracle de renaissance ... . Sous cette enveloppe de mort, il se trouva partout, dans la moindre bourgade, des hommes tout préparés pour écrire dans les cahiers les longues plaintes de générations passées et les voeux de l'avenir.[10]

The nobility and clergy, caught up in the fervour of the Third Estate, embraced, albeit more reservedly, the cause of reform. All three orders, in their cahiers, agreed upon certain civil reforms: "unité de législation, suppression de la juridiction des intendants, publicité des tribunaux, égalité et adoucissement des peines, admission de tous aux emplois, repartition égale des impôts".[11] It was only the subsequent agitation for political reform, for the recognition of popular sovereignty, that sundered this early unity and made conflict inevitable. The "social revolution", Quinet writes, aroused no controversy; civil and material reforms were "born of themselves":

> La Révolution sociale se faisait du consentement de tous. La noblesse et le clergé ne prétendaient pas s'y opposer; pour faire passer dans la loi des voeux à peu près unanimes, il n'était pas besoin de si prodigieux efforts et d'une telle effusion de sang.[12]

But to civil reform, some wished to add "spiritual" reform, that is to see liberty enshrined in political institutions, in religion, and in the spirit of the people themselves. Therein, argues Quinet, lay the source of the struggles which were to come; liberty, and liberty alone, was the object of all the great journées of the Revolution, he insists, despite the efforts of some now to deny this fact. The political awakening of the people in 1789 took by surprise those accustomed to lead and direct. Enlightenment ideals, from 1770 to 1788, had been the intellectual property of a select minority. Faced with a population no longer passive, newly educated in these same ideals, many among the elite took fright: "Les timides deviennent les téméraires, et les téméraires deviennent les timides".[13]

Until July 14, 1789, Quinet writes, the Revolution remained somewhat diffuse, "éparse", without a base or central figure. Necker provided the symbol which focused its energy and concentrated activity in Paris. From the moment his dismissal became known on the 12th, events proceeded with a confusing rapidity. By the 14th, "all of Paris was seeking arms". Quinet describes briefly the assault on the Bastille and the ferocity of the crowd. He stresses, however, not its actions but its motivation. It

was, above all, an attack upon absolute authority, a blow for liberty and freedom of thought:

> [la Bastille] était la prison réservée aux écrivains, la geôle de l'intelligence. Le premier mouvement de Paris avait été de renverser cette geôle, c'est-à-dire, d'affranchir la pensée. Avénement de l'esprit, sécurité, dignité humaine, voilà ce que signifia cette première journée; personne ne s'y trompa dans le monde.
> .....
> ... La journée du 14 donna son vrai sens et son âme à la Révolution, et cette âme se trouva être la liberté.[14]

The people carried the revolution beyond the intention of the original reformers. After July 14, Quinet writes, the basis for the monarch's exercise of authority was in fact, if not in theory, eliminated. The people imposed their victory like a reconciliation and the King feigned acceptance. Only a few perceived the impossibility of maintaining such a "contract". The Comte d'Artois and the Prince de Condé left France: "... ils emportent avec eux la monarchie légitime; ce fut le commencement de l'émigration".[15]

Quinet explains the increasing radicalism of the three succeeding years in terms of the political struggle between Louis XVI and the elected representatives of the people. The King sought to retain both his power and his honour, an impossible task, says Quinet, for each derived from a

concept of absolute rule which the Revolution had, with finality, overthrown. Quinet regards with astonishment the hope entertained by many, including Mirabeau, that a constitutional monarchy could be established. After such humiliation and threats as the Royal Family endured in the October invasion of Versailles, no sincere acceptance of the Revolution could be expected from the King. Describing the scenes of jubilation and triumph which greeted Louis XVI's enforced installation in the Tuileries, Quinet stresses the depth of the illusion which saw inaugurated "journées de concorde":

> Presque tous pensèrent que l'alliance entre le roi et la constitution venait d'être scellée, parce qu'il y avait eu des acclamations, des sourires sous les piques and sous le dais. Comme si de pareilles injures pouvaient être effacées jamais![16]

In fact, the Revolution was intensifying. Though the October Days were themselves a sudden and widespread response to famine and rumours of the King's preparations for flight, a movement without leader or preconceived objective, "une de ces journées ou parait le mieux la force secrète de la Révolution", they were succeeded by risings less spontaneous and popular:

> La Révolution ... n'avait pas encore de chefs; mais ces têtes se formaient. Bientôt il ne se fera plus un mouvement qu'elles ne l'aient préparé.[17]

It was a mistake, argues Quinet, to effect a revolution

but continue the nominal authority of the King. The leaders of the constitutional party created a paralyzing dilemma to which no one yet dared suggest the obvious and inevitable solution, a republic. Instead, suspicion and enmity grew between the King and the Assembly and rendered the constitution of 1791 inpracticable from the beginning:

> On avait fait une constitution royaliste pour un roi à qui il était impossible de l'accepter autrement que comme une couronne d'épines. Il courba la tête; mais il se promit de la relever et de rejeter ce diadème, dès qu'il serait le plus fort.
>
> Telle était la situation dans laquelle on entrait. L'oeuvre ne pouvait vivre un seul jour.[18]

Quinet returns to the events of the fourth of August to begin his discussion of the "civil revolution". If the constitutionalists, men such as Malouet, Clermont-Tonnerre, Sieyes, Thourut, Chapelier, and, above all, Mirabeau, were singularly naive in their assessment of the King's position, they were, nevertheless, admirable for their adherence to principle and commitment to political rather than material goals. The repudiation by clergy and nobility of vestigial feudal privileges on the night of August 4, failed to impress these reformers or to reassure the higher orders that their concessions had been accepted as sufficient, because, writes Quinet, other objectives were paramount in the minds of these men. In this, they present an

instructive contrast to later generations:

> Car, tandis que les hommes de 89 vivaient sur ce principe, que la liberté est l'origine de tout, on a vu leur postérité se fondre sur cette autre maxime, que les avantages matériels sont la seule chose à considérer, et que là où ils existent, la liberté est inutile ou périlleuse.[19]

The 4th of August demonstrated, in Quinet's view, another of his favorite themes: that social or material change is in the nature of things, that revolutions are fought for "spiritual" ends. Many have misinterpreted the events of this night, he argues, because they fail to see that it was merely the "occasion", not the origin or cause of civil equality in France:

> La grande puissance de nivellement qui poussait de loin la société française, et que rien ne pouvait arrêter, eut alors son dénoûment. Resta le problème de la liberté, c'est-à-dire la difficulté tout entière.
>
> C'est pour n'avoir pas vu ce travail de nivellement, que tant d'historiens se sont mépris sur les résultats de cette nuit. Il ne fallait plus qu'une occasion: les choses se précipitèrent d'elles-mêmes.[20]

Quinet goes on to discuss the "territorial" revolution of January, 1790, stressing again not the circumstances of change or its actual provisions but its psychologicial origins. The new <u>départements</u> were created with ease because local loyalties had been effaced by the policy of centralization under the <u>ancien régime</u>. The French "hated" their history; they had no nostalgia for demarcations which

recalled to them nothing but "oppression, inimitié, rivalités au profit d'un maître".[21] Quinet thinks this failure to consult and accommodate regional aspirations a calamitous mistake, for it concentrated political activity in Paris:

> Ainsi cette Révolution immense n'a eu qu'un seul foyer; celui-là éteint, tous les autres devaient l'être à la fois: un certain équilibre, dont ne peuvent se passer les peuples même dans leurs plus grandes ivresses, a presque toujours manqué; et le colosse à la tête prodigieuse a gardé des pieds d'argile.[22]

Just as the provinces were eliminated without regret, so, too, were the parlements and the network of intendants in the spring of 1790. Quinet finds it remarkable that of all the lawyers in the Constituent Assembly, none sought to uphold a legal or administrative principle which had so long prevailed, the idea that all powers emanated from the royal power. He sees in this changed "temperament", the most striking feature of the first three years of the Revolution:

> Si donc l'on me demandait en quoi le changement fut le plus grand de 89 à 91, je n'hésiterais pas à dire que ce fut dans cette rupture absolue des hommes nouveaux avec la tradition byzantine et impériale, qui depuis Charles V jusqu'à Louis XVI avait été la tradition constante de l'ancien régime. Là je saisis l'esprit même de la Révolution.[23]

Quinet concludes his discussion of the "civil" revolution, that is, the abolition of feudal privilege, the re-structuring of territorial, administrative and judicial

organization, and the ease with which it was concluded, with a re-statement of his belief that "difficulty" in the Revolution arose solely from questions of political and religious liberty:

> ... c'est pour elles seules que le sang a coulé, c'est pour elles que les hommes ont enduré cent fois pis que la mort.[24]

Failure to recognize this has contributed to the mistaken view which so many hold of the Revolution. It did not initiate the movement for material reform, for redistribution of property, equitable taxation, access of all to employment, for the recognition, generally, of the principle of equality. The Revolution coincided with and accelerated this movement.

> La vérité est que le développement matériel s'accomplit par une sorte de végétation à laquelle rien ne peut s'opposer. Les choses se transforment, elles se déplacent par la vertu seule du temps.[25]

Quinet goes on to present, in two long sections on religion and the Constitution of 1791, those struggles he thought did define the Revolution. The cause of religious liberty was ill-served by the Revolution, he maintains. Influenced by Rousseau, who taught that traditional forms of religious observance might be preserved for the unsophisticated and that all religions served equally well this purpose, the revolutionaries retreated before the

necessity of thorough religious reform and contented themselves with private doubt and public reverence for religious belief. The proclamation of "liberté des cultes" in 1789 was premature; it precluded any guarantee of reform, any maturing of new ideas:

> Que signifiait cette parole toute seule, pour la France de 1789? Le droit imprescriptible de ne pas sortir du cercle de ses anciennes formes religieuses, et, par une conséquence rigoureuse, le droit de faire une révolution qui, ne changeant rien à l'ordre spirituel établi, ramènerait presque infailliblement, sous d'autres noms, le principe constituant de l'ancien ordre politique.[26]

The civil constitution of the clergy, proclaimed June 17, 1790, effected no real change in the position of the Church in French society. It emancipated the priest from his bishop and the bishop from Rome, writes Quinet, but left untouched the spiritual servitude which Catholicism embodied. The revolutionaries shrank from any overt attack upon the teachings of the Church because they had too little faith in the wisdom of the people, too great a fear of leading where none would follow. It was this tentativeness, this inadequate preparation for a new and lasting order, which was one of the major causes of the Revolution's failure:

> Cette peur qu'éprouvent les terroristes, voilà la cause la plus profonde de la chute de la Révolution; car avec cette peur secrète d'être reniés par le

> peuple, ils n'osent d'avance l'instruire ni le preparer sur rien. On fait un premier secret de son scepticisme, on en fera un autre de la République; le nom même n'en sera pas prononcé, tant on craint de devancer l'intelligence paresseuse du plus grand nombre ... .[27]

If the Revolutionaries mishandled the matter of religious reform, they were equally at sea in pursuing the goal of political liberty. Two days sufficed to institute change within the civil order, Quinet asserts; two years barely sufficed to establish a new political order.[28] Precedents for liberty were not to be found in the experience of the nobility, the clergy, or the Third Estate; the political revolution did not proceed smoothly towards a stated goal, but fitfully from innovation to innovation. Decentralization and the dismantling of royal authority, which Quinet suggests were the ends towards which all the work of the Constituent Assembly tended, remained unarticulated in any policy or principle but the "joy" of rediscovery of a nation, of a "grand peuple" so long eclipsed by a monarch, led even sincere royalists to create a political structure inhospitable to a monarch. This spontaneous revival of local liberties was the most instinctive and characteristic expression of the "spirit of the Revolution", states Quinet:

> ... je conclus que le premier instinct de la révolution politique, son oeuvre la plus libre, la plus spontanée, fut de diminuer le pouvoir central; que tout ce qui se fera dans ce sens, sera dans l'esprit de la Révolution, et que tout ce qui se fera d'opposé sera fait contre elle.[29]

The political inexperience of the revolutionaries, which led them to place too great a reliance on the permanence and efficacy of laws and decrees, and the inflexibility of the King and his advisors, who saw ruin in the merest constitutional revision, added to the great difficulty of reconciling liberty and the monarchy. It was a task beyond the powers even of Mirabeau:

> Mirabeau s'épuise, il se consume, se déshonore à chercher cette alliance. Il y laisse pour holocauste sa mémoire. Quand un tel homme résoud un tel problème par l'infamie, dites hardiment que le problème était impossible.[30]

Quinet devotes much of this section on the Constitution to a discussion of Mirabeau, his duplicity, his manipulation of opinion, and his cynicism. Mirabeau taught that the appearance of reform served as well as the fact, that people were easily moved by words and promises. Though his temperament and teachings were out of step with the vitality and passionate idealism of his own times, they suited well the mood of disillusion of later times. Mirabeau's ideas became the "code" or "genius" of counter-revolution, Quinet states.[31] Mirabeau, however, performed one valuable

service for the Revolution; he maintained an equilibrium between the power of the Assembly and the force of popular will:

> Tant qu'il vécut, il fut le lest et la raison de l'Assemblée. Sa puissante tête contre-balança la foule. Après lui le gouvernement échappa à l'Assemblée et passa à la place publique.[32]

Quinet returns to narrative with the Fête de la Fédération, held on the first anniversary of the fall of the Bastille. Unlike Michelet, who presents it as a day of joyous celebration, Quinet sees ominous portents of things to come in the King's reluctance, Talleyrand's hypocrisy, and the silent hostility of Camille Desmoulins. The falsity of the day's apparent harmony was quickly revealed. Quinet describes the harsh suppression of the military revolt at Nancy in August. Despite the court's victory in this first conflict with the Revolution, Quinet writes, it took alarm and no longer entrusted its safety to French troops. After the death of Mirabeau and with him, secret plans for a "coup d'état" against the Revolution, the King became convinced of the necessity of flight from France. Quinet dwells upon the pathos of the Royal Family's attempt at escape in June, 1791 - the faults of the plan, the slow progress of the journey, the brief glimpse of freedom and safety, the fateful delay at the entrance to Varennes, then capture and ignominious

return to Paris. He suggests that a great source of friction and fear would have been eliminated had the King been permitted to escape or been exiled. All were mistaken, sympathizers and enemies, who thought any action of the King could divert or jeopardize the course of the Revolution for France was entering upon a new age:

> On ne savait pas que l'on entrait dans un ordre tout nouveau, où l'armée se ralliait à Paris, dès que Paris avait prononcé. Et ce n'était pas seulement Paris qui se soulevait; c'était la France entière, avec une unanimité écrasante dont l'ancienne France ne pouvait donner aucune idée.[33]

But France, at this stage, was neither a monarchy nor a republic, Quinet asserts. The King was unable to declare his authority, the Assembly unwilling to proclaim its. Out of this ambivalence and indecision arose a sense of helplessness which many came to believe the result of conspiracy and treason:

> Jours funestes que ceux où une nation ne sait pas clairement ce qu'elle veut! Dans ce trouble d'intelligence, elle prend son indécision pour l'effet de la perfidie; elle ne peut agir et elle se sent liée par une force qu'elle ignore. Moment où tous les soupçons commencement; les fantômes envahissent les révolutions de ténèbres.[34]

Just how long or to what extent the vision of the people was thus clouded Quinet fails to clarify. He soon begins to claim for it a grasp of the exigencies of the situation superior to that of the leaders in the Constituante. The demonstration in the Champ de Mars was

one result. Republican sentiment, fostered by popular journals and clubs, had begun to take hold of the people, writes Quinet, who gathered July 17, 1791, to sign a petition demanding the King's abdication.

Organized by leaders newly risen from the crowd, it was, nevertheless, writes Quinet, a "spontaneous" act of some five or six thousand persons, men, women and children, a popular movement not yet tainted by recourse to violence or intimidation. Ordered to disperse, they resisted, only to be reduced by force. This first instance of popular defiance of the National Assembly had effects far beyond the loss of life, continues Quinet; it produced, between the people and the Assembly, an ungovernable enmity.

The obdurance of the constitutionalists in the face of hostile public opinion diminished and discredited the Assembly in its final months. Far from being the culmination of the Revolution, the seal upon its labours, the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, in Quinet's view, marked only the end of a travesty:

> Quand elle se sépara, le 30 septembre 1791, il y avait déjà deux mois qu'elle n'était que l'ombre d'elle-même. Enfin elle disparut, presque rebelle à ses oeuvres, et malgré sa grandeur et son génie, laissant un héritage de faiblesses et de ruines à tous ceux qui imiteront ses fictions ou sa crédulité.[35]

The remnants of the constitutional party were soon

eclipsed in the new Legislative Assembly. Within five months, leadership passed into the hands of the confident young Girondins:

> Pleins eux-mêmes d'illusions, ils nourissaient chez les autres cette illusion, que la Révolution était finie et qu'ils en avaient cueilli le fruit. Semblables à ces coureurs qui apportaient avant l'heure, au peuple, la nouvelle prématurée de la victoire, eux aussi devaient tomber hors d'haleine avant d'avoir achevé leur message.[36]

Men of obscure origin, they demonstrated clearly to Louis XVI that the revolution could not be confined to the streets. Until now, Quinet writes, the King maintained an imperturbable facade, outwardly acquiescent but biding his time. With the appointment of a Girondin ministry in March, 1792, and the appearance, in his court, of men wearing "souliers sans boucles", so great was the King's sense of change and doom that all his hesitation and meekness vanished. He vetoed the Assembly's decree against non-juring priests and another to establish a permanent camp for the fédérés, and dismissed, in mid-June, Roland, Clavière, and Servan. He continued, too, his secret appeals to Leopold of Austria and Frederick William of Prussia for intervention. Quinet does not review the debates which preceded the declaration of war on April 20th, 1792 but states his conviction that France could not do otherwise than actively resist the menace which Louis' treachery provoked.

The rising of June 20, 1792, was significant, in Quinet's view, for its indication of things to come. A demonstration protesting the dismissal of the Girondin ministry and the King's refusal to sanction the two decrees, the 20th of June marked the first irruption of the crowd into the Assembly chamber, the first sign of popular disrespect for revolutionary leadership. In fact, writes Quinet, the embryonic Republic suffered more harm on this day than did the monarchy, despite the humiliation and insult endured by Louis XVI in the later invasion of the Tuileries:

> Si l'on abaissa encore d'un degré la royauté, d'autre part, par ce premier essai des armes dans le sein des lois et de l'Assemblée, on frappa la république avant qu'elle ne fût née, et l'on prépara l'avortement de la Révolution. Il n'y eut plus de lieu sacré pour abriter la liberté; elle perdit ce jour-là son sanctuaire.[37]

Quinet considers this demonstration, unlike the march on the Bastille and the gathering in the Champ de Mars, planned in advance, no longer the spontaneous protest of a free people but an orchestrated affair of a manipulated crowd:

> Ces discours si étudiés montreraient à eux seuls combien les mouvements populaires qui semblaient le plus spontanés étaient prémédités de loin dans les conciliabules de quelques-uns.[38]

Still, the people had not yet succumbed entirely to the will of dark forces. The 10th of August, 1792, was the day,

Quinet writes, on which long simmering hostility towards the King and fear for the continued independence of France suddenly burst forth. It was a day of "instinct", he claims; no single popular leader can be discerned as its instigator. Even Danton "paraît céder au torrent plutôt que commander", unless, Quinet adds sceptically, one chooses to consider his tranquil sleep on the eve of events that of a leader confident of the success of his machinations.

It was the newly elected section leaders almost all unknown and to remain so, who, writes Quinet, accepted the "mandate" to "save la patrie" by carrying out an insurrection against the commune and setting in motion a second revolution. Through the night of August 9-10, members of the Assembly affected ignorance of the preparations for combat all about them and awaited the emergence of a victor. Even the flight of the Royal Family from the hostile crowd marching upon the Tuileries and the subsequent massacre of the Swiss Guards failed to rouse them to decisive action. The monarchy had fallen, states Quinet, and with it, the authority of the Legislative Assembly:

> Après avoir perdu l'estime au 20 juin, elle perdit au 10 août l'autorité, ne sachant ni empêcher, ni agir, ni commander; ...
> Il ne lui restait qu'à se donner des successeurs.[39]

Now triumphed the unknown orators from the clubs; initiative began to pass from the elected representatives of

the people to arrogant new men of the multitude, men like Huguenin, Santerre, Bourdon de l'Oise, and Drouet, later to become "les petits employés" of the Empire. Quinet has as little admiration for the skill of such leadership as for its quality. The municipal insurrection was accomplished by a minority seizing upon a propitious moment:

> Comme dans toutes les journées de ce genre, le peu de décision dans la défense précipita la victoire des sections. Au moment du combat, il n'y avait guère, parmi les assaillants, que trois mille hommes; après le succès, ce fut un peuple immense.[40] Des poignées d'hommes décidaient de tout Plus tard, quand cette tête fut détruite, il resta, comme par le passé, une nation étonnée de ce qu'elle avait fait, prête à renier ses guides.[40]

Nevertheless, the tenth of August inaugurated one of the greatest changes in the "temperament" of the Revolution, Quinet concludes. The monarchy overthrown, there was now no limit to the fears of some or the ambitions of others:

> Des horizons nouveaux, infinis, s'ouvrirent à la douleur, à la joie, au deuil, au désir, à l'épouvante. Chacun se fit sa chimère de désolation ou de félicité. L'ame humaine franchit toutes les bornes connues; c'est là le monde dans lequel on entre depuis le 10 août.[41]

Quinet attributes to the ambition and vengefulness of the insurrectionists much of the responsibility for the September massacres. Fueled by reports of military losses and an invading Prussian army, fear swept Paris and was channelled into desperate reprisal against supposed enemies of the Revolution, arrested in late August by the Commune.

It was Marat, however, who conceived the nightmare which followed:

> Il est bien certain que lorsqu'il eut dans ses mains cette vaste proie de trois à quatre mille prisonniers, prêtres insermentés, familiers de la cour, suspects de toute sorte, il tressaillait de joie. Le plan de carnage qu'il avait dans l'esprit et qu'il refaisait jour et nuit lui parut à moitié realisé.[42]

Few resisted his demand for a "military tribunal" and swift justice; all feared to have hesitation taken as weakness. Even Danton acquiesced: "Il obéit, il sert, il ferme honteusement les yeux, et laisse couler et tarir le sang".[43] Quinet's account of the September massacres does not disguise the horror of wholesale execution but he goes beyond its description to offer psychological explanation of its origins. He makes the point that all leaders who owe their power to precipitate action and uncertain popular acclaim must sustain it through audacity, an insight he applies to radicalism generally in the Revolution. He also suggests that Paris remained "inert" throughout the carnage because it was carried out with a semblance of procedure and in the presence of "officials" - judges, inspectors, and executioners. This "assurance dans le sang", writes Quinet, gave to the September massacres the appearance of an "administrative measure", carried out in the name of authority.[44] Quinet is as much appalled by this moral failure as he is by the killings themselves. Public

conscience long remained silent. By its "grand coup sanglant" of September, Quinet concludes, the Commune was assured obedience for eighteen months.

Quinet interrupts his discussion of the political scene to present an account of the early campaigns of the war, the disastrous offensive against Belgium in the spring of 1792 and Dumouriez' successful repulse of invading Prussian troops in September. Quinet asserts that the revolutionary army, galvanized by patriotic fervor and provided with committed leadership after August 10, opposed a new and formidable force to the conventional military resources of the coalition. Foreign troops did not again try to march on Paris until twenty-two years later: "ils avaient vu de près la Révolution à son foyer; ils en avaient rapporté un sentiment d'épouvante ou de respect".[45]

The security of France and of the Revolution was assured by the victories of the fall, Quinet continues. While the Prussians, in retreat, fell back upon a traditional strategy of siege warfare, the French had time to perfect a superior strategy of movement and innovation:

> Dès ce moment, il est permis de se demander si le terrorisme était nécessaire pour que le plan le meilleur l'emportât sur le pire, et si l'art a besoin de l'échafaud.[46]

After the fall of the monarch in August and in the early days of the Convention, the Girondins appeared to

triumph, writes Quinet, but conditions and the very nature of their political temperament precluded a more than illusory victory. The Girondins attached too great an importance to oratory, suggests Quinet. They identified and measured their opponents by their declarations, not by their acts, and thought to dominate by the power of words alone. They envisaged no need for extraordinary measures, no difficulty that enlightenment and enthusiasm could not overcome. The Jacobins, on the other hand, perceived a need for force:

> [ils ont établi] qu'il s'agissait pour fonder la liberté de vaincre la nature des choses, de créer du néant l'âme civile d'un peuple, d'accomplir un prodige. Ils ont vu devant eux une oeuvre surhumaine; ils ont juré de l'accomplir avec gloire ou avec barbarie.[47]

Thus, the Jacobins displayed a "feverish impatience" in seeking the King's death, Quinet continues, believing it to be the solution to all the ills that weighed upon France:

> Le roi mort, tout deviendrait facile. L'Europe serait épouvantée, la guerre abrégée, la victoire décisive, l'abondance assurée, les partis résignés ou éteints. Ainsi l'illusion se mêlait à la haine.[48]

The Girondins, however, had a just appreciation of the consequences which did, indeed, follow upon the King's execution: "... le ressentiment implacable des princes, l'Europe indignée, la guerre universelle, à la fin un maître ...".[49] But their moderation, in supporting an appeal to the people, inspired less confidence than the refusal of the

Montagnards to consult any conscience but their own or that of the Revolution they claimed to represent. In the early months of 1793, Quinet writes, the Girondins allowed initiative to pass to the Jacobins, supporting, without much conviction, the latter's proposals for a revolutionary tribunal, "cartes de civisme", a Maximum on grains, and the establishment of the Committees of Public Safety and General Security. In a crisis which called for decisive and authoritative action, the Girondins offered debate and deliberation:

> Jusque dans les emportements de ses orateurs, il restait une sorte de convenance; cet équilibre démentait la rage révolutionnaire.[50]

Revolutionary rage is the medium of despotism, however. The extraordinary measures undertaken to combat war, famine, and insurrection, Quinet argues, represented an aberration in the context of the Girondins' policy and temperament but were the essence of Jacobinism:

> Ces institutions formidables, le tribunal extraordinaire, le comité de salut public, ne sont encore que des germes, des commencements qui ne pourront grandir au souffle modéré de la Gironde. ... Pour ces armes nouvelles, trop pesantes pour eux, il faudra d'autres hommes.[51]

Thus, the diminishing stature of the reluctant Girondins; thus, the appeal of the aggressive Jacobins. Each equally sincere in their desire to serve France they could not overcome the mutual suspicion and insecurity that

flourished with the sudden removal of the King. Quinet suggests that it was the absence of a common religious belief, the basis for accord and compassion and a sense of community, which contributed to the weakness of words and the power of suspicion:

> On eût dit qu'il manquait entre eux le Dieu qui, chez tous les autres peuples, avait donné la force, l'autorité, la sanction à la parole humaine.[52]

In the mounting conflict the Girondins had legality on their side, but the Jacobins had power: "... le peuple, les armes, les clameurs de la foule, la Commune, les sections, les tocsins, les canons d'alarme, les clubs souverains, les forêts de piques dont ils étaient déjà à demi environnés".[53] The Girondins put their trust in the power of words and invincible justice, writes Quinet. Armed with this "sublime chimère", this "épée invisible", they were left without support or authority in the midst of a hostile populace. They were compromised by their association with Dumouriez and his treachery and weakened by the failure of their denunciation of Marat. They made their final mistake, says Quinet, in calling for an election in a time of national peril, with the Austrians pressing on the borders of France. The Girondins were defeated not simply by rival party policy but by the evidence of popular mistrust, which their enemies in the Assembly, hesitant at first, seized upon on the 31st day of May and turned to their advantage.

Quinet refutes the suggestion of Jacobin apologists that the attack upon the Girondins was the response of a far-seeing leadership to necessity:

> ... à la première sommation de la foule, les girondins seront livrés; preuve que les actes les plus décisifs n'étaient point engendrés par une pensée supérieure des chefs de parti, un calcul de génie, une véritable raison d'État, mais emportés par un transport, une ivresse, une saillie de tempérament dont on n'est plus maître et que l'on appellera plus tard nécessité.[54]

Quinet describes the events of May 31 and June 2, 1793, emphasizing the "military precision" of the insurrection against the Commune, the deplorable readiness of the Plain to side with force, the helplessness and disbelief of the Girondins in the face of a hostile populace which demanded, and in the end obtained, their arrest. The 31st of May, in Quinet's view, marked the end of the Revolution's advance. Intimidation and fear conquered principle; a precedent was set which was to influence political life in France for years to come. In Quinet's opinion, the acquiescence of the Plain was a failure of will, a moral abasement, which gave rise to a fatalistic acceptance of force:

> Ils se vouèrent désormais, pour le reste de leur vie, au culte de la force quelle qu'elle fût; et cette démission morale, ils devaient l'appeler un peu plus tard habileté ou fatalité.[55]

The ease with which opinion may be courted and manipulated by intimidation was another lesson of the day,

not lost upon "later Kings and princes" but unheeded by those who brought down the Girondins and were themselves to fall victim to their own weapon. From this time, too, "national interest" was invoked as a justification for the attack upon individual liberty and diversity of political opinion. The Convention bowed before the pressure of extra-parliamentary activity: it was soon ignored by the people who turned their not always benevolent attention to the Commune. The regeneration of France, Quinet writes, was sought not through newly born liberty, but through tyranny, the way of the ancien régime.

If the loss of liberty was the first and most significant result of May 31, the "déchirement" of France was the next. The provinces, having been granted in the early days of the Revolution a degree of autonomy unknown under the ancien régime, now rebelled against an usurping authority ruling from Paris which could make no claim to represent them:

> Une partie des provinces cessèrent de voir dans la Convention décimée l'autorité suprême. Elles refusèrent de respecter l'assemblée qui n'avait pas su se respecter et qui s'était livrée. D'où les révoltes du Calvados, de Lyon, de Marseille, de Bordeaux, de Toulon, la moitié du territoire soulevée contre l'autre.[56]

But again, as in the past, France was brought to bow before an absolute and centralized authority. To believe,

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as the Jacobins appeared to, that liberty can be temporarily set aside and re-established at will is a vain and pious hope:

> Abolir la liberté, sous le prétexte qu'on l'établira plus tard, est le lieu commun de toute l'histoire de France. Ce fut aussi celui de la Révolution; et il est certain qu'on s'épargnait une grande difficulté. Mais les temps ont prouvé que c'était ajourner la Révolution elle-même.[57]

In Quinet's view, no argument of force of circumstances or urgent necessity can justify the Terror. The threat of invasion by foreign armies had greatly diminished by the summer of 1793, he states. Furthermore, the revolts in the provinces were largely the result of the Terror, he believes, and cannot be cited, as some do, as one of its causes. Nor can the Terror be accepted for its supposed success in defending France and the Revolution. Far from "saving" the Revolution, the men of the Terror were responsible for the loss of its most noble achievement, the liberal republic:

> L'illusion persistant des Terroristes est d'invoquer le succès pour se couvrir devant la postérité. En effet, lui seul pouvait les absoudre. Mais ce succès, où est-il? Les Terroristes dévorés par les échafauds qu'ils ont dressés, la République non-seulement perdue, mais devenue exécrable, la contre-Révolution politique victorieuse, le despotisme à la place de la liberté pour laquelle toute une nation avait juré de mourir: est-ce là le succès?[58]

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The Terror was an instrument of a small minority, of a despotic regime little distinguished from its predecessors by a supposedly "popular" cast. Quinet does not accept the argument that tyranny in the name of the people is somehow more benevolent or of a higher order than the tyranny of a single ruler. Quoting Tocqueville's observation that the Terror had produced "des bourgeois rangés et de lâches citoyens", he adds:

> Sophisme éternel des plébéiens, qu'ils peuvent faire à leur gré de l'absolutisme; que cette arme, dans leurs mains, ne blesse personne; qu'elle est, pour eux, la lance d'Achille; que la tyrannie, s'ils l'exercent, perd aussitôt sa mauvaise nature et devient un bienfait![59]

There was nothing innovative or modern about the Committee of Public Safety and its administration, he continues. In its centralization of power, it recreated the institutions of the past:

> Dans le réseau de fer que Billaud-Varennes étend sur la France par l'organisation révolutionnaire, se retrouve la trame du gouvernement de l'ancien régime sous d'autres noms. Les agents nationaux ne sont-ils pas assez pareils aux intendants?[60]

In spirit, as in substance, the regime established under the Terror seemed, to Quinet, to look back rather than ahead. Robespierre's self-proclaimed incorruptibility revived the impassive majesty claimed for past monarchs:

> Quand Robespierre fait le tableau de ce pouvoir absolu qui doit être juste, dégagé de passions,

> terrible aux méchants, favorable aux bons, il revient, sans y penser, à l'ancienne royauté telle que l'ont dépeinte tous ses ministres.[61]

The Revolution, Quinet concludes, threw off only briefly the weight of past centuries. Liberty is the discovery of the modern mind, submission, the habit of the "medieval" mind. So long as liberty was nurtured, the Revolution, and human history, advanced. But under the Terror, passivity, fear and cynicism - the ignoble inheritance of the French - reasserted itself. Just as they acquiesced in the "dragonnades" of Louis XIV, in the persecution and exile of the Protestants, so now did the French watch in silence the long series of "official murders" and the attack upon ideas.

Though Quinet condemns the Convention, as he does the Legislative Assembly, for its irresolution in the face of popular demonstrations, he does find much to commend in the vigour and astonishing breadth of its legislative activity, at least until August, 1793. To some extent, he admits, the sense of urgency which inspired its members was due to an awareness of personal vulnerability, of time running out, but also to an acceptance of the "generalist" principle, which permitted each deputy the fullest expression of his various aptitudes, in contrast, Quinet remarks rather acidly, to the specialization of his own day which scarcely

permitted "que l'homme qui a fait la pointe d'une épingle en puisse aussi faire la tête". Quinet admires the grandeur of the enterprise undertaken by the Convention. It was nothing less than an attempt to re-make man, to re-make civilization itself:

> Quand j'ai voulu m'éclairer sur le caractère de la Convention, j'ai vu un travail incessant de civilisation au milieu d'une bataille soutenue contre le monde entier; grandeur unique entre toutes les assemblées humaines ... .[62]

Quinet is particularly struck by the unanimity and accord which attended Cambacérès' presentation to the Assembly in 1973 of a new civil code. Nothing, he claims, does greater honour to the French than their espousal, in the midst of war and chaos, of legal principles which endure in France and abroad, as the basis of a new civil order which Napoleon wrongly claimed as his own.

Quinet also approves, with some reservations, the Convention's policy of dechristianization. He sees in the popular response to official dechristianization evidence of a genuine desire for religious reform. Quinet dismisses Chaumette's Cult of Reason as a superficial piece of theatre, a vulgar spectacle, but considers it, at least, more attractive to the people than Robespierre's cold, ascetic alternative, the Cult of the Supreme Being. The efforts of Jacobin leaders to subdue popular feeling

against the Church and their defence of the principle of religious toleration in November and December of 1793, Quinet sees as an unwonted timorousness, a fear of the Revolution itself. Reluctant to break decisively with the Church, taking refuge in a policy which offered security to all but advantage only to the strongest, that is, to Catholicism, Robespierre and the Committee of Public Safety condemned France to servitude and superstitution:

> Les douze dictateurs, armés de la hache, firent rentrer la France dans le cercle du moyen âge, d'où un instinct barbare, il est vrai, mais populaire, la poussait à s'affranchir.[63]

Quinet considers at length the "theory" of the Terror. He argues that it would have been entirely consistent with the Jacobins' policy and methods to oppose Catholicism more vigourously. That they did not was a demonstration of the fatal contradiction at the heart of their regime, the simultaneous defence of the old and the new, of absolutism and liberty:

> ... Si l'on voulait la terreur, il ne fallait pas la tolérance; si l'on voulait la tolérance, il ne fallait pas la terreur.[64]

Another "flaw" of the system was the essential humanity of those who applied it. Most of the Jacobins had not the temperament for the Terror, adds Quinet: "Le génie d'extermination n'est chez eux qu'un accès".[65] They

lacked the sang-froid which characterizes aristocracies, monarchies, and theocracies. A democracy is too immoderate and impetuous to maintain an impassive and unchanging facade; it encompasses uncertainty and vulnerability and so gives rise to expectation of change, Quinet writes. A democracy which attempts to rule by terror will inevitably yield to despotism. The same principle applies to Robespierre. In the end he was repelled by the barbarism of the Terror and recalled to the humanitarian teachings of the eighteenth century: "Enfin, il faut avouer qu'un prince trouvera toujours pour ce rôle des complaisances et des patiences qui manqueront à un simple citoyen".[66]

Quinet declares that after the fall of the Girondins, opposition to the Terror remained mute for some months. Towards the end of 1793, some began to ask publicly when and how it might be ended, a question to which the Terroristes dared not respond for it revealed their quandary:

> Les indulgents, en marquant un terme à la Terreur, soulevaient la difficulté mère et toutes les contradictions du système. Ils montraient l'incertitude des chefs, leur existence au jour le jour, leur embarras secret, leur lutte intérieure avec eux-mêmes.[67]

The Hébertists, the "ultra-revolutionaries", posed a more immediate danger to the Terroristes. Quinet writes that in eliminating the Hébertists, "Saint Just écrase la

plèbe, les masses obscures; il commence à se séparer de la multitude".[68] But in attacking both moderation and immoderation, the Terroristes left no sure ground. With the execution of the Dantonists, the destruction of the Republic's foundation was complete:

> Ainsi la base de la république allait décroissant chaque jour. Avec les Girondins, avaient été extirpées les âmes les plus hautes; avec les Hébertistes, les plus effrénées; avec les Dantonistes; les hommes de nature et de sens.
> .....
>
> La Révolution française ne reposait plus que sur la point d'une pyramide funèbre.[69]

Quinet describes the final weeks of Robespierre's power, drawing frequently upon Baudot's memoirs which depict Robespierre as plotting dictatorship, increasingly disdainful of the Convention, secretly reviled and mocked by those about him. Again, Quinet's analysis is psychological; he writes of Robespierre's emotional isolation, his preoccupation with moral questions rather than political crisis, and his paralysis in the face of danger.

Quinet sees no reason to wonder at or regret Robespierre's downfall. Robespierre, he writes, was no political visionary or leader; he left no enduring organization, thought, or policy. His only legacy to the political life of France has been a rationale for dictatorship:

> Cet héritage est l'idée de la nécessité d'une dictature pour fonder un état libre. Idée qui a frappé souvent dans la nuit à la porte du Comité de salut public, aux heures désespérées, et, éconduite, s'est répandue on ne sait par quels canaux dans la tradition vivante d'une partie de la démocratie française.[70]

If Quinet still saw in the dechristianization movement of late 1793, evidence of a united and revolutionary peuple, he finds only unruly mobs after the ninth of thermidor. Their champions executed or discredited, the people disintegrated and retreated in confusion and sorrow:

> Retiré de la place publique, loin des sections, des tribunes de la Convention, ou privé des échafauds, insulté déjà par la jeunesse dorée, découronné de sa royauté éphémère, il revint à son foyer. Il le trouva sanglant, triste, désert, misérable; et il sentit qu'il avait faim.[71]

Popular energies were now expended in pursuit of material and individual ends; the demand for bread rose over the call for liberty. The uprisings of 12 germinal and 1 prairial, in contrast to those of 20 June and 10 August, were precipitated by famine, and if they surpassed in defiance and contempt for authority their predecessors, it was not because of a greater determination or higher purpose but rather the opposite, the complete abandonment of principle and order. The Terror had had its effect, writes Quinet. After seventeen months of being ruled by fear, men lost all compassion and fellow feeling and came to despise

that which they did not fear. Lacking leadership, lacking belief in themselves or a cause, the populace dissipated its remaining energy in these last furious but ineffectual risings and subsided.

A similar theme of moral disintegration pervades Quinet's account of the Thermidoreans. In the wake of germinal and prairial came a tumult of accusations, he writes. The Thermidoreans demonstrated such haste and vindictiveness in their indiscriminate attacks upon former Jacobin colleagues that however understandable the original impulse to condemn, the result of such cowardly and ill-considered attacks was to "put in doubt" the whole of the Revolution: "La Terreur avait été une première calamité; une seconde qui perdit la République fut le procès fait à la Terreur."[72] Quinet even brings himself to admire the "indomitable spirit" of certain ex-Jacobins, so distasteful does he find the pusillanimous and bloodthirsty Thermidoreans. The violence of the White Terror disgusts him even more than that of the September massacres, being more furtive and sadistic, with no aspect of "popular justice".

Despite his contempt for the Thermidoreans and his hostility towards their predecessors, the Jacobins, Quinet writes with some regret of the dissolution of the Convention

in October, 1795. Soon, he writes, small passions will prevail. The conventionnels, looking back upon their work, found much to condemn and regret but at least found cause for pride: "Ils se glorifient de ses périls, de ses audaces, de ses fureurs plus qu'humaines; quelquefois ils s'étonnent d'avoir fait partie du monstre."[73] A just history of the Convention is still to be written. Quinet says: "Dans les histoires terroristes, la pitié est violée. Dans les histoires écrites au nom de la Réaction, c'est la vérité qui manque ...".[74]

Quinet's ambivalence towards the Convention and the Jacobins becomes even more marked when he proceeds to a discussion of the Directory. Though he describes it as one of the three regimes since 1795 which attempted to offer to the French liberty (the other two being the Monarchy of 1830 and the Republic of 1848) he admires it little enough for its effort. Based on a constitution founded in fear and distrust, it was necessarily tentative and conservative. Its moderation, in Quinet's view, was tantamount to a failure of will, a renunciation of the noblest aims of the Revolution. The "corruption" of the Directory lay not in a frivolity of pursuits and tastes or an abandonment to

greed and self-indulgence, but in this abdication of responsibility:

> C'est précisément en cela que consiste la renommée de corruption du Directoire. N'en cherchez la cause, ni dans la vie dissolue de Barras, ni dans l'avarice de Sieyès. Cette corruption descend de plus haut; elle réside tout entière dans le reniement de chaque jour ... . On s'est engagé pour le monde, et l'on commence à se dégoûter de cet engagement pris à la face de la terre. Tel a donné sa parole de régénérer l'univers, et voit combien la régénération de soi-même est difficile et coûteuse. Qu'il serait plus commode d'y renoncer.[75]

The revolutionaries, from the Constituante to the Convention, states Quinet, had taken the initiative in everything: "Ils avaient assumé sur eux la responsabilité des choses nouvelles". The Directory had not. In the name of liberty, it unleashed the vengeance of the Terror's victims and opposed no restraint to their attack upon the Revolution and the Directory itself. The "fermeté heroïque" of the Terroristes was succeeded by an ignoble weakness, which held out scant hope for the survival of liberty and the Republic: "Ce n'est pas avec cette pusillanimité de coeur que se fondent les états", writes Quinet, apparently forgetting his earlier objections to Jacobins who would force men to be free.

Another element in Quinet's general theme of spiritual or moral disintegration is his perception of the beginnings of class conflict. Though he acknowledges that society had

been to a great extent restructured by the Revolution, he argues that the people and the bourgeoisie were not at first divided by any separate interests, that the Third Estate was united in common political purpose. After Thermidor, however, economic interest came to dominate affairs; the masses abandoned liberty and fraternity and clung only to equality, in Quinet's view, the least noble of the revolutionary objectives:

> Signe immanquable d'abâtardissement, le grand nombre répétait qu'il ne remuerait plus que pour un profit immédiat et palpable. Des trois termes de la Révolution, liberté, fraternité, égalité, les deux premiers n'exercaient plus aucun prestige; le troisième seul avait gardé le sien.[76]

The bourgeoisie, too, abandoned purely political aspirations. Insecure in the possession of property so recently and so violently acquired, many were consumed by fear for its safety. Seeking to strengthen rather than limit political authority, to establish guarantees for property rather than liberty, they became eager supporters of Napoleon. In the absence of common goals and motivated by increasingly divergent material interests, class antagonisms grew and hardened. In asserting the existence of class conflict prior to 1793, Quinet argues, historians make the mistake of transposing present conditions onto past events.

The final years of the Directory Quinet depicts as a time of increasing silence and apathy on the part of the people and increasing weakness of a government unable to be convincing even in its repression. People looked beyond the discredited Directory to the young General Bonaparte:

> L'obéissance que les Directeurs imposent ne profite qu'à Bonaparte; il occupe, il envahit, il remplit des esprits de plus en plus vides d'espoir ou d'ambition. Grâce à l'inertie, au silence commandé et aussi à l'éloignement, ses victoires, les moins disputées, d'Egypte et de Syrie, les Pyramides, mont Thabor, Aboukir, en parurent surhumaines.[77]

With the coup d'etat of 18 brumaire, the Revolutionary period is brought to an end:

> Ce n'est qu'en arrivant au coup d'État du 18 brumaire que vous voyez les causes produire leurs effets, et les énigmes s'expliquer. La période est alors achevée; l'histoire semble s'arrêter elle-même un moment, avant de substituer un homme, non-seulement à un peuple, mais à une révolution.[78]

In Quinet's view, the Revolution was "surrendered" to Napoleon, not by Jacobins or Montagnards, as some have argued, but by the Modérés, and with such alacrity that Napoleon had only to "gather the ripe fruit of Reaction." Malaise and instability had long undermined the Directory, Quinet states, and the restiveness of satellite states had increased its uneasiness, but no crisis, no immediate danger existed to justify the claims of the conspirators and of

Napoleon himself that France had need of a figure of authority.

Just as Quinet disputes Napoleon's claim to have rescued France from chaos, so does he challenge his claim to be a "true son of the Revolution." Like all despots, Quinet says, Napoleon wanted not only to conquer but to convince: "C'est trop peu qu'on plie le genou si l'intelligence ne se plie à son tour." But people deceive themselves if they consider Napoleon's five Codes an adequate memorial to the Revolution, he continues. Of its political achievements, there remained but little:

> En réalité que reste-t-il alors de la Révolution politique? Un idéal, un drapeau, quelques mots de justice qui flottent sur l'abîme, ...[79]

Quinet's minimizing of the importance of economic or material factors in directing human history and his insistence, instead, on the influence of personality and belief led him to devote much of La Révolution to the examination of individuals.

What most draws Quinet's admiration and attention is the element of the heroic - the intensity of commitment, the elevation of sentiment, the power of command - in the personages he depicts. Quinet is as much concerned with their character as he is with their acts or achievements as

administrators, party leaders, or political theorists. Thus it is that Quinet's claim to impartiality can, in a sense, be upheld. Where his judgement as a political observer might condemn, his sympathetic interest as a student of human nature can still grudgingly admire.

This is most evident in his portrayal of Mirabeau, whom he finds, with some reluctance, a fairly compelling and attractive figure. Mirabeau's was a great talent lent to ignoble ends, like the eagle of mythology transformed into a serpent. If his duplicity in entering into secret negotiations with the King was undertaken with a desire to serve the Revolution, and Quinet accepts that it was, it was not the less disastrous for being well-intentioned. To Mirabeau's treachery can be attributed the first stirrings of public distrust and disillusionment and the foundation of Robespierre's appeal: "Mirabeau vendu, c'est avénement de Robespierre l'incorruptible."[81]

Quinet's portrayal of Danton is conventional: Danton was the "Atlas" of the Revolution, a realist and a fallible human being who stood in marked contrast to the ascetic visionary, Robespierre. Quinet finds little to say of Danton's policies or leadership of a faction; instead he presents him as the soul of the Revolution itself.

If Quinet's sympathy is with Danton, his keenest interest is not. It is Robespierre to whom Quinet devotes the greater degree of his attention. He is both fascinated and repelled by Robespierre's nature, so odd a mixture of sincerity and self-delusion, rationality and vision, excess and constraint does he find it. Though he discovers and admires in Robespierre a belief in the power of ideas, suggesting that the source of Robespierre's power lay in his appeal to the spiritual wants rather than the material ambitions of men, and suggests, also, that Robespierre was too much a man of the Enlightenment not to be dismayed, in the end, by the excesses of the Terror, Quinet cannot but shrink from a personality so little given to spontaneity, warmth, or fellow-feeling. Robespierre had little knowledge of and less true sympathy for the people whose cause he is considered to have championed, states Quinet. So little did he believe in "le peuple" that he opposed the war, in 1791, out of doubt in the strength of its commitment to the Revolution. His suspiciousness and lack of trust similarly influenced the stringency of repression during the Terror and the growth of panic and factionalism within the Convention. Robespierre's much vaunted "incorruptibility", his indifference to personal gain or benefit, was less the

result of principled self-denial than mere preoccupation, Quinet asserts, and expresses his annoyance that Robespierre should reap such credit for a pose which cost him so little. Still, Robespierre was sincere in arguing the corrupting influence of material inducements, Quinet believes, to the extent that he could scarcely have countenanced any "gift" of property to the people: "Robespierre avait 'peur de l'argent pour lui'; il en eut peur aussi pour le peuple. Lui distribuer gratuitement des terres! il eût appelé cela corrompre".[81]

Quinet insists that Robespierre and Saint-Just, after their deaths, were little regretted, that the belief which attributed to them a "vision of justice and universal happiness" thwarted only by the "caprice" of circumstances, was the creation, some forty years later, of historians devoted to "systems":

> Après ce long intervalle, certains esprits se sont passionnés pour Robespierre et Saint-Just, et leur ont montré d'autant plus de faveur qu'ils les ont vus plus reniés ... cette superstition n'a pas été entretenue par les souvenirs du peuple. Il y est resté absolument étranger; mais elle a reparu quarante ans après les événements, refaite par la science, l'érudition, les systèmes, c'est-à-dire par ce qu'il y a de plus contraire à l'inspiration des masses.[82]

Quinet frequently compares Robespierre with Napoleon, seeing in each an authoritarian bent which, in his opinion,

establishes the link that overrides any divergence in political philosophy. Each sought closer ties with the Roman Catholic Church; each developed a centralized form of government; each was, in fact, the incarnation of the principle of the ancien régime, absolutism.

Napoleon was the more ambitious, however, seeking not only dominance in France but conquest abroad. In this he introduced something new in French history and alien to the French mind. The desire for empire is a feature of the Latin temperament, Quinet states, which has its origins in the Byzantine emperors and its echo in the Ghibellines of the Renaissance:

> Le sang italien courant de veine en veine, depuis les partisans de Frédéric Barberousse et de Henri VII jusqu'aux Bonaparte gibelins du XVIe siècle, pouvait seul produire ce colosse de gloire et vertige qui nous étonnera, nous éblouira, nous troublera, jusqu'à ce que nous en ayons vu et compris enfin la cause historique.[83]

In Napoleon, this "antique" imperial strain co-existed with a "profoundly modern" (and French, Quinet suggests) inclination towards the scientific and the legalistic, thus producing the startling and contradictory images of the Empire: "egalitarian" and aristocratic; "liberal" and repressive; "rational" and Roman Catholic.

Quinet's treatment of historical figures is heavily overlaid with psychological analysis, sometimes eccentric, sometimes perceptive, just as his treatment of past events emphasizes spiritual influences over material ones. It was an approach entirely consistent with his belief that the past is a source of moral lessons which must be sought and promulgated, that the history of the Revolution is a sort of vast cautionary tale, but is an approach uncongenial to minds inclined or trained to a less personal view. It might be argued that La Révolution is more fruitfully examined less as history than as an historical document examined in the context of the intellectual life of its times.

Footnotes to Chapter III

[1]Quinet, Histoire de mes idées, p. 78.

[2]Mme. Quinet edited Baudot's Notes, ineptly, in Monod's view (see his review, in Revue historique, LV, (mai-août, 1894) 124) for publication in 1893. They were reprinted by Slatkine-Megariotis in 1974. Written in exile, over a period of some years, Baudot's Notes are retrospective and ill-organized, consisting of disparate reflections and recollections, usually brief, relating to personalities and events of the Convention and Directory. Though Jaurès made frequent reference to them in his Histoire socialiste de la Révolution française, (1901-04), they do not appear to have been much consulted by any notable historian since.

[3]Edgar Quinet, La Révolution, I (Paris: Librairie internationale, 1869), ii.

[4]See R. R. Palmer, Twelve Who Ruled; The Committee of Pubic Safety during the Terror (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), pp. 189-92, passim; and Charles Vellay, "A. Trimoulier, Un Missionaire de 93: Marc-Antoine Baudot", Annales révolutionnaires, II (1909) 108-09.

[5]Henri Monin, "Histoire extraordinaire des papiers Baudot et de leur publication", Annales révolutionnaires, II (1909) 180-200.

[6]Godechot, Un Jury, p. 73.

[7]Quinet, La Révolution, I, 2.

[8]Godechot, Un Jury, p. 59.

[9]Quinet, La Révolution, I, 21-23.

[10]Ibid., pp. 25-26.

[11]Ibid., p. 33.

[12]Ibid., p. 34.

[13]Ibid., p. 45.

[14]Ibid., p. 67.

[15]Ibid., p. 70.

[16]Ibid., pp. 92-93.

[17]Ibid., p. 92.

[18]Ibid., p. 97.

[19]Ibid., p. 101.

[20]Ibid., p. 105.

[21]Ibid., p. 110.

[22]Ibid., p. 112.

[23]Ibid., pp. 117-18.

[24]Ibid., p. 123.

[25]Ibid., p. 121.

[26]Ibid., p. 155.

[27]Ibid., p. 182.

[28]Ibid., p. 194.

[29]Ibid., p. 197.

[30]Ibid., p. 209.

[31]Ibid., p. 215.

[32]Ibid., p. 223.

[33]Ibid., p. 288.

[34]Ibid., p. 293.

[35]Ibid., p. 299.

[36]Ibid., p. 310.

[37]Ibid., pp. 338-39.

[38]Ibid., p. 336.

[39]Ibid., pp. 372-73.

[40]Ibid., pp. 374-75.

[41]Ibid., p. 376.

[42]Ibid., p. 378.

[43]Ibid., p. 381.

[44]Ibid., p. 386.

[45]Ibid., p. 408.

[46]Ibid.

[47]Ibid., p. 424.

[48]Ibid., p. 430.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Ibid., p. 442.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Ibid., p. 445.

[53]Ibid., p. 440.

[54]Ibid., p. 444.

[55]Quinet, La Revolution, II, 10.

[56]Ibid., p. 18.

[57]Ibid.

[58]Ibid., p. 242.

[59]Ibid., p. 202.

[60]Ibid., p. 199.

[61]Ibid., p. 203.

[62]Ibid., p. 124.

[63]Ibid., p. 148.

[64]Ibid., p. 180.

[65]Ibid., p. 207.

[66]Ibid., p. 225.

[67]Ibid., p. 248.

[68]Ibid., p. 253.

[69]Ibid., p. 261.

[70]Ibid., p. 342.

[71]Ibid., p. 353.

[72]Ibid., p. 385.

[73]Ibid., p. 403.

[74]Ibid., p. 404.

[75]Ibid., pp. 436-37.

[76]Ibid., p. 456.

[77]Ibid., pp. 475-76.

[78]Ibid., p. 490.

[79]Ibid., p. 538.

[80]Quinet, La Révolution, I, 221.

[81]Quinet, La Révolution, II, 105.

[82]Ibid., p. 336.

[83]Ibid., pp. 531-32.

CHAPTER IV

"La Révolution"

as Philosophy and Political Comment

La Révolution is an example of history in a literary mode, a genre, in 1865, destined to disfavour. Published not long before "scientific" history was given official recognition with the appointment of its chief practitioner, Alphonse Aulard, to the newly created Chair of French Revolutionary History at the Sorbonne, Quinet's work drew greatly in its method and its style upon intuition and a Romantic sensibility.

Quinet's eager eye for the dramatic or heroic, inevitable in one who expended so much of his creative energy in the production of verse and prose epics, is apparent in his choice and treatment of the dominant figures in his narrative. Louis XVI appears almost a tragic hero, irresolute and imperceptive but humane and principled, his greatest fault or error, that of upholding an honour which time and circumstances would no longer admit. The King's flight to Varennes, his subsequent imprisonment and execution, Quinet recounts at length and with much sympathy. Charlotte Corday, for Quinet as for many republican historians of the early nineteenth century, a Girondin heroine of saint-like dignity and sublime beauty, receives elegaic treatment in a chapter significantly entitled:

"Que la poésie n'est pas toujours une fiction". Quinet invests the final days of the Girondins with a nobility and selflessness historians do not usually accord them, seeing in their utterances a lament for liberty and the future of France. He defends, too, the virtue of another of his heroines, Mme. Roland, whose illicit passion for Buzot, he liked to think, was in part a literary invention of her own.

Like Michelet, Quinet is fond of set-pieces, or "tableaux", skimming over events and their background to land periodically in the midst of scenes which capture his imagination and interest: the October days, the flight to Varennes, the 10th of August, the attack on the Tuileries and the massacre of the Swiss guards, the execution of the King, the murder of Marat and trial of Charlotte Corday, the decimation of the ragged Vendéan army, the Festival of the Supreme Being, and the eve of 9 thermidor all arouse his dramatist's instincts.

He uses frequently allusion and metaphor. The tale of Charlotte Corday, for example, well displays Quinet's taste for classical allusions. Charlotte Corday was the grand-niece of Corneille; she saw herself, and her Girondin heroes, says Quinet, as figures in a drama, as life imitating her ancestor's art. Quinet is attracted by such

parallels himself, comparing her to Brutus and her victim, Marat, to Caesar, albeit a "sans-culottes" version. He develops here, and repeats frequently elsewhere, the analogy between the Girondins and Athenian democrats, each characterized by their humanity, reason and love of liberty. Historical allusions also serve, if somewhat imprecisely, to define the other revolutionary factions. If the enlightened Girondins were "Athenians", Robespierre and Saint-Just were "Spartans", inflexible and authoritarian. Quinet carries this not unfamiliar metaphor further by comparing the "classical" Republic of the Robespierrists with the "plebeian" Republic of the Hébertists. In making such a distinction, however, Quinet is not emphasizing the socio-economic characteristics it seems to suggest but rather a divergence of style. The Hébertists opposed the vernacular, the theatrical, and the popular to the Robespierrists' lettered, austere, and aristocratic style.

Quinet was scarcely original in his presentation of narrative set-pieces or use of classical references: they are characteristic of the works of many other historians of the time, notably Michelet, Thierry, and Lamartine. Where Quinet does depart from the conventional, perhaps, is in his development of the parallels between natural and human history. A theme he was to develop to an almost absurd

literalism in La Création remains, in La Révolution, in part, philosophy, in part, imagery. His concept of civilization's evolution is reflected in images from nature. He writes, for example, that the Jacobin dictatorship is an example of "atavism", that biological principle of recurrence which produces in a descendant characteristics of its progenitors.[1] France, like a living being, ages: it has passed through "youth" and "early manhood", its time of restlessness and inquiry; it is now approaching maturity and seeking comfort and convenience.[2] He believes that the extraordinary individual, like a notable specimen in the natural world, is the origin of a new genus, a new world: "Respectez donc l'individu; il est le principe des révolutions dans l'homme comme dans la nature."[3]

Quinet the poet-dramatist often overwhelms Quinet the historian. It is sometimes difficult to determine, as in his frequent allusions to "Byzantine" tradition, where literalism ends and metaphor begins, where he suggests a real and direct inheritance and where he intends only comparison. His characterizations draw greatly upon physical description, particularly lurid in the case of Marat, and upon psychological conjecture. He capitalizes upon pathos and suspense: his description of Danton's final speech to the Assembly, his magnificent voice filling the

Chamber and, through its open windows, echoing beyond to the silent streets of Paris, is memorable if, perhaps, overdrawn. His frequently ironic tone is at times so laboured that his point is obscured. Playing the devil's advocate, as he does in his discussion of Mirabeau, he can enter into his role so heartily as to put in doubt the nature of his real convictions.

Doubts such a mixture of symbolism, imaginative reconstruction and dramatic characterization might awaken in a contemporary critic, Quinet would disparage. Style, in historical writing, was to him inseparable from purpose and Quinet's purpose was to exhort. His narrative passages usually serve as much to illustrate a moral or make an oblique comment upon contemporary affairs as they do to illuminate events of the Revolution. More pertinent a criticism of La Révolution might be that which relates to its inconsistency. A flaw which aroused much acid comment in contemporary reviews, it seems to have been one to which Quinet himself remained oblivious. In his discussion of the Vendéans, for example, he insists that religious belief cannot be eradicated by force; yet, elsewhere, in discussing the "timidity" of the Jacobins' religious policy, he suggests that a rigorous assault on Roman Catholicism would surely have been effective: "Il n'est même rien de plus

vain que de croire que la force ne peut rien contre des idées."[4] His apparent advocacy of the use of force, in this context, is in itself a contradiction of his basic premise that violence, once unleashed, produces only further violence and general demoralization, and that ends do not justify a means. He scorns the "legalism" of Robespierre and Saint-Just, their affinity for "systems" derived from theory, and condemns the orderliness and efficiency of the mass execution of prisoners in the September massacres as "official carnage".[5] Yet he contrasts favourably this same respect for law, for proper procedure, with subsequent acquiescence to arbitrary military rule and states with some degree of approbation that even during the height of the Terror, men never questioned the Rule of Law. He insists that "le peuple" was never in advance of its leaders but elsewhere claims that the people perceived the need for a republic long before revolutionary leaders dared suggest it and also that these leaders were sometimes transported beyond intention and remembrance by popular sentiment.[6]

Such inconsistency arises when Quinet permits his Romanticism to overcome his rationalism; his admiration for the heroic, the passionate, the steadfast, then silences the moralist in him. Quinet's logic and good sense also falter

in the matter of religion. He was not the only historian or political observer of his day to regard an adherence to Roman Catholicism as destructive of independent inquiry or critical intelligence but he was undoubtedly unique in attributing so paramount a role in the French Revolution to religious belief and institutions.

Quinet, the philosopher of history, is as apparent as Quinet, the poet-dramatist. Throughout his history of the Revolution, Quinet alludes to both the present and a more distant past, to the France of the Second Empire and the France of Richelieu and of Louis XIV, seeking to establish lines of continuity and consequence in accordance with his premise that human history is organic, that events can be fully understood only by relating them to all that has gone before:

> Si vous ne voyez pas l'esprit de la France ancienne se maintenir et se perpétuer dans la nouvelle, renoncez à rien expliquer des déviations, des oscillations, des égarements, des reniements de la Révolution, et surtout des léthargies qui la suivent. Le passé est un aimant caché qui attire perpétuellement le génie d'un peuple et influe sur chacun des ses mouvements. Voilà pourquoi il ne marche en ligne droite. C'est une vaste science que celle de ses mouvements composés.[7]

Institutions and policies of the ancien régime, the centralized monarchy and the "Terror" of 1687, reappear in the form of the Committee of Public Safety and the Terror of 1793. However much the revolutionaries considered

themselves innovators, they were tied by traditional belief to old forms, old ways:

> Sitôt que les révolutionnaires se furent créé, dans le Comité de salut public, un pouvoir fort, ils l'adorèrent. Rien ne leur sembla plus neuf dans le monde que cette adoration. Dans le fond c'était l'ancien culte des Français pour l'autorité absolue; plus on rentrait dans les formes anciennes, plus on croyait innover.[8]

History offers models for comparison and guidance, Quinet suggests. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes, which drove the Protestants from France, reveals the disastrous consequence of the loss to France of its most serious, indomitable citizens and their moral leadership, a lesson unheeded by the Terroristes. Exile and persecution demonstrate the tenacity of spiritual commitment, as opposed to more ephemeral political allegiance. The story of the Vendéans is, in Quinet's eyes, significant not because he sympathizes with their cause but because he marvels at their steadfast adherence to it. The early revolutionaries offer an instructive example of that disinterestedness and vitality which political ideals can engender - a salutory example for the tired and comfort seeking generation of his own day.

Past events, then, have an immediacy which contemporary society can ignore only at its peril. History is instructive if the historian will but seek its lessons. If

some of these lessons are practical ones which suggest a suitable course of action, more important are the moral lessons which influence the spirit of a nation:

> L'historien doit remplir au milieu du drame des événements l'office du choeur antique chargé de maintenir, de proclamer la justice en dépit de la bonne ou mauvaise fortune. Mais si, au lieu d'être le gardien des lois morales, l'historien achève lui-même de les abolir, en détruisant la conscience, il détruit la trame de la justice dans l'avenir encore plus que dans le passé.[9]

By "conscience", Quinet means an attachment to absolute standards, a judgement unimpaired by any considerations of circumstances or results. The abandonment of conscience is exactly that error into which so many of his contemporaries have fallen, he asserts, in contemplating not only the Revolution but the whole of French history. It is a common practice of those historians who subscribe to deterministic theories of history to confuse the material and the moral, to consider those conditions which produce a given result not only "necessary" but justified.

Quinet's conclusion that the Revolution was not so "cataclysmic" as some would have it is both a criticism and a defence. On the one hand, it led only to a triumph of familiar absolutism, centralization and Roman Catholicism; on the other hand, it was less destructive or radical than either counter-revolutionaries or socialists insist, for their own divergent purposes. Quinet is somewhat offhand

about the changes the Revolution did effect. He perceives, without offering any evidence, a "levelling" effect upon society but considers this much less significant than the fact that political institutions remained, in spirit, the same:

> Sans doute, les hommes, les temps avaient changé; les classes s'étaient brisées, nivelées, au moins dans les lois; c'était là un grand résultat. Mais enfin, l'âme du droit politique était restée la même, puisque après des efforts si désespérés pour échapper au pouvoir d'un seul, on y rentrait ... .[10]

Quinet considers the discovery of a "socialist" convention and a "communist" Mountain, anachronisms. The "socialism" of Robespierre and Saint-Just was more a "literary" and "moral" concept than a well-developed economic policy. He considers the testimony of Baudot revealing:

> N'est il pas frappant, en effet, qu'un homme [i.e. Baudot] d'un esprit aussi acéré ait pu vivre, pendant toute la Convention, sur la crête de la Montagne, sans y avoir jamais ouï parler, par qui que ce soit, Dantoniste ou Robespierriste, d'abolition de propriété, d'État propriétaire, niveleur, producteur, consommateur, ni de loi agraire, ni d'égalité des biens, ni de tendance aux doctrines de Babeuf, ni d'aucun de ces vastes projets que la postérité crédule, soit en France, soit à l'étranger, a si souvent attribués à la Convention de 1793? N'est-ce pas la preuve la plus certaine que ces projets n'existaient pas dans les têtes même de Robespierre et de Saint-Just, qu'ils n'avaient sur ces points que des vues vagues, mobiles, changeantes, plutôt littéraires et morales qu'économiques, mais aucun système formel autre que celui de la propriété individuelle; ... .[11]

Quinet believes the increasing radicalism of the Revolution to have arisen from the force of circumstances, not from the conscious application of theory. Like many historians of his day, Quinet viewed the eruption of popular demonstrations and violence as a response to counter-revolutionary provocation: "À chaque attaque de la Cour répond une attaque du peuple; à chaque réaction, une révolution nouvelle."[12] Thus, to the Royal session of June 23, 1789, came the people's response, July 14; to the assembling of troops at Versailles and the "fêtes de l'Orangérie", the invasion of the palace; to the King's refusal to sanction the decree against refractory clergy and émigrés, the 20th of June; to the dismissal of the Girondin ministers, the 10th of August; to the taking of Verdun, the September massacres; to the Brunswick Manifesto, the trial of the King; to the army of Condé, the revolutionary army; to the coalition, the Committee of Public Safety; to the "League of Kings", the Terror.[13]

Mounting violence and radicalism came to appear to some as a system, argues Quinet. Robespierre, Saint-Just and Billaud-Varennes saw in the institutionalizing of violence a means of maintaining the French in a permanent state of "exaltation", so long as there remained an obstacle to be overcome. In creating the Terror, they attempted to

transform an "accidental" process into a permanent condition, to make of a momentary abandonment of moderation and compassion, a principle of government:

> Froidement et impassiblement, ils convertirent la furie gauloise en règles; ils rendirent durable ce qui, de sa nature, n'est que passager: l'indignation, la crainte, la frénésie; ils firent de la fureur un froid instrument de règne et de salut.[14]

The Jacobin leaders, like their later apologists, were not only incorrect in their assessment of events, they were wrong to thus divorce sentiment from policy, to eliminate "conscience" in the management or contemplation of human affairs. Quinet's condemnation of the Terror is more subtle than that of most anti-Jacobin historians of his day. A materialist, he accepted the explanation of circumstance; a moralist, he rejected the defence of inevitability or necessity.

The Jacobins were not totally lacking in qualities Quinet admired - dedication, sincerity, energy - but he was adamant in his view that their ideas on government and religion caused not only the defeat of the Revolution but contributed to all subsequent political ills of France. Liberty and "modernity" triumphed briefly, to be driven underground by the Committee of Public Safety and the Terror. Quinet believes that the cause of liberty was not destroyed but certainly much weakened; it remained to

trouble the authoritarian regimes of the nineteenth century. "Modernity" continued, too, its struggle against superstition and ignorance but in remaining the preserve of an enlightened minority it exacerbated strife within France. Quinet's perception of "les deux Frances" differs somewhat from the usual; he believed division in the intellectual world produced barriers to common political purpose and endeavour far more formidable than the merely "odious" distinction created by the Constituante between "passive" and "active" citizens. Referring to the religious policy of the Jacobins, a policy of tolerance for the sake of convenience, he claimed, he states that it not only ensured the survival of a tradition hostile to revolutionary aims but established a gap between advocacy and belief:

> Une autre conséquence se déduisait nécessairement aussi des principes de Robespierre, et n'allait pas moins directement contre ses projets. Si les chefs, les orateurs, les élus du peuple confirment, par leur respect, ce qu'ils tiennent pour autant d'erreurs méprisables, que s'ensuit-il? Il se forme deux nations: le peuple du préjugé, de la superstition, du mensonge, et le peuple de la raison, de la sagesse, de la vérité; et entre eux la barrière est infranchissable.[15]

Quinet's aversion to "castes" marks him as a democrat but in a particular and limited way. Greater equality of condition was not a stated concern of Quinet. Nor was an equal degree of political participation necessarily the defining characteristic of a democratic society. Quinet

seems to argue that the inner conviction of equality was as important, if not more so, as the external reality. To suggest that because the poorer classes were not specifically represented in the Constituent Assembly they were excluded from a political process which operated in the interests of the rich is to confuse form with substance:

> Les classes pauvres ne figuraient pas à la Constituante; cela a fait croire à des historiens que cette Assemblée ne représentait que les riches. Le peuple, il est vrai, n'était pas à la tribune, il ne parlait pas; mais il écoutait, il se réveillait d'un sommeil de mille ans, il naissait à la parole des orateurs; et n'est-ce rien que de naître?[16]

From the beginning of their self-discovery, the people felt themselves the equals of the bourgeoisie and as one with them in their goals. It is only contemporary observers, states Quinet, transposing an emphasis of their own day, who argue the irreconciliable interests of the two groups. "Non," he writes, "le peuple n'a pas commencé par être plèbe, comme quelques-uns se le figurent aujourd'hui; il s'est senti en naissant l'égal des classes supérieures dans tout ce qui intéresse l'homme."[17] Quinet objects to the use of the term proletariat in describing the lower classes in the time of the Revolution. It relates to the classical era, he argues, to the Rome of the Caesars, is suggestive of servility and silence and is not at all appropriate to the proud and eager populace which appeared in France in 1789.[18]

Quinet's regard for the people was tempered by a distrust of their susceptibility to incitement and manipulation, not uncommon among the "men of '48". He stresses the necessity of constant "cultivation" of the "spiritual force" of the masses through moral and political education, to prevent that reversion to "primitive type" which impedes progress in human as in botanical evolution.[19] He claims, too, that the Revolution faltered not for want of leadership but for want of an enlightened following. However dramatic and important the emergence of "le peuple", it did not long endure. The habitual obedience of the French people re-asserted itself in the end, and in all but military endeavours, they failed the purpose set before them:

> Ne dites pas que les hommes ont manqué à la Révolution; aucune n'en a produit un plus grand nombre. Mais la nation a manqué à ses chefs dans tout ce qui n'a pas été la guerre. L'appel aux armes fut le seul qui produisit tout ce que l'on pouvait en attendre. Le peuple y fut sublime; dans le reste, il faillit presque toujours à ses institutions.[20]

The political role Quinet seems to envisage for the people, therefore, is not one of initiative but of concurrence. He repudiates as a false and dangerous belief the idea that a "people" cannot be represented, that popular will is indivisible , that a "state" can be co-terminous with a "people". The Jacobins' infatuation with Rousseau,

who advanced this notion, explains the alacrity with which they abandoned the Constitution of 1793 and embarked instead upon dictatorship:

> Qu'est-ce qui rendait impracticable la constitution de 1793? Ce ne sont pas les vues sociales, mais les vues politiques. Ce n'est pas Morelly ou Mably, c'est Rousseau. Quand il fallait, pour chaque loi, assembler toute la nation française en de perpétuels champs de mai, il est évident que l'on ordonnait l'impossible. La fausse vue du Contrat social, que le peuple ne peut être représenté, se prenait à la lettre. Paradoxe dans un livre, calamité dans un peuple.[21]

Quinet sees Rousseau's baleful influence everywhere - in the idea of traditional religion as a bastion of the state; in the prejudices and hatreds of Robespierre and the habit of suspiciousness which infected the Terroristes; and in the distrust of 18th century philosophy and its "sterility" which obscured the positive aspect of its iconoclasm.

Quinet attributes a great deal to the power of ideas. The revolutionaries emerged out of the climate of opinion created by the Enlightenment; enthusiasm growing out of ideas rather than resentment arising from grievances characterized the cahiers submitted to the Estates-General, he claims. The Revolution, itself, was advanced by books, journals and, most importantly, political clubs. The people, too, concerned themselves with political ideas and issues - the King's veto, the declaration of war, the civil

constitution of the clergy. The preoccupation with material interests which characterized society of his own day, says Quinet, was not yet evident in 1789:

> Il [le peuple] a eu, sur toutes les grandes affaires, le même coeur, la même pensée que la bourgeoisie. Le réduire à la seule préoccupation de le famine et du salaire, c'est lui ôter à la fois le passé et l'avenir. Car, que pourrait être jamais une classe d'hommes qui, dans les crises les plus décisives de l'humanité, ne verraient jamais autre chose qu'une crise alimentaire?[22]

If Quinet wishes to put the role of the people on a higher plane than that of mere reflex, he stops short of viewing it as in advance of opinion. The people, themselves, did not speak or lead but were "impelled" by their bourgeois leaders:

> La multitude se place très-vite chez nous par l'action à la hauteur de ses chefs, mais ces chefs sont d'une autre classe. Le peuple obéit promptement à l'aiguillon de la presse et de la tribune. Lui-même ne parle pas, n'écrit pas. On le dirait muet. Il agit sous une autre impulsion et il reste anonyme.[23]

Only after three years of tutelage under a lettered elite did the people finally come to the fore of the revolutionary scene. Even then, Quinet insists, it was not the growing ambition or resentment of the people themselves which brought them there, but the agitation on their behalf by a segment of a now divided bourgeoisie:

> Il fallut les aiguillons furieux de la presse pour lui faire sentir l'injure de la distinction

> entre les citoyens actifs et les citoyens passifs. Encore sa colère ne s'alluma-t-elle jamais contre cette inégalité; on ne put le pousser à s'ameuter contre elle.
>
> Je ne vois pas un seul prolétaire dans l'avant-garde de la Révolution. Il a fallu trois ans de prédications de la classe lettrée pour faire entrer le peuple en scène. C'est absolument renverser l'histoire que d'établir aujourd'hui qu'il a precédé ses chefs. La vérité stricte est que la bourgeoisie s'est divisée; une partie s'est effrayée et a voulu s'arrêter, l'autre a continué de marcher au devant de l'inconnu. Dans aucun cas, l'initiative n'a été prise par des prolétaires.[24]

"Le peuple", then, was susceptible to the influence of ideas, even if these did not originate with it, and was, in fact, distinguished from a directionless mob by this very trait. Quinet also attributes to the people, however, the possession of an infallible instinct, a "heart", which served them better than mere reason:

> Tant qu'il conserva ce pur idéal de la patrie, il en fut illuminé. Il discerna sans peine ses amis et ses ennemis; ... .
>
> Quand plus tard l'intérêt seul remplaca l'idéal de justice, alors les mots suffirent au people; ... .
>
> Sitôt, en effet, que le peuple renonce à sentir et se réduit à raisonner, il n'est rien au monde de plus facile que de l'abuser; car, sur ce terrain nouveau, il n'a aucune expérience, nul moyen de s'orienter.[25]

It was this awakened instinct, the élan of the people, which often carried the Revolution beyond the aspirations and beyond the desires of its leaders during the great days of the Revolution:

> Beaucoup d'esprits avaient été emportés par le

> peuple, comme par un océan, au delà de leur nature ordinaire; puis le peuple se retira, en oubliant sa cause; et les esprits qui s'abandonnèrent à lui demeurerent échoués, naufragés, sans pensée, et qui pis est, sans souvenir.[26]

Quinet expresses scorn for those early revolutionaries who expected change to conform to "literary" principles and who drew back from the reality. At one point, he writes disparagingly of theorists whose understanding of the dynamics of popular movements was uninformed by any experience or real sympathy:

> Malheureux les peuples dont les révolutions sont conduites par des hommes de plume étrangers à l'action; ceux-ci sont trop loin des idées du peuple. Tout ce qu'ils ont écrit une fois, ils s'imaginent l'avoir gravé sur l'airain et dans les âmes; ce qu'ils critiquent, ils se figurent l'avoir extirpé. Pour s'ôter la peine de vaincre, ils triomphent d'avance.[27]

Quinet was referring in this passage to the tenacity of religious faith. He sees in its strength a useful lesson for those convinced of the power of words alone. Fanaticism exerts a power which men of letters little comprehend and which political leaders confront at their peril. It is a power, he believes, which testifies to the primacy of man's spiritual needs and which demonstrates the truth of his contention that systems of belief shape or inform all other institutions in society.

If Quinet's views on the respective roles of an informed leadership and an inspired populace seem

contradictory, it might be because he recognized both convictions derived from reason and convictions arising from the imagination. He admires the former but feels the compulsion of the latter. Each is necessary to the other: once political ideals and commitment fade, instinct fails and when enlightened leadership is eliminated, a popular movement subsides. But Quinet insists upon the heroic ardour of the masses, nevertheless; if his paean to the people is not without qualification, it is still very much in the Romantic tradition.

Quinet is not so enamoured of "le peuple" as to make a qualitative distinction between a dictatorship created in its interests and a dictatorship created in the interests of a single tyrant. No political or economic end can justify such a loss of freedom; this was Robespierre's error, and has been also the mistake into which a segment of the democratic party of France has fallen. Quinet heaps scorn on those who fail to recognize absolutism in another guise:

> Quelle complaisance! quelle admiration sans bornes! Jamais, dans aucune histoire, l'autorité absolue n'a reçu un pareil culte. Le vertige prend les démocrates; les voilà enivrés dès le premier jour à la même coupe où ont bu tous les rois.[28]

Socialism, in Quinet's view, represented an appeal to the baser desires of man, to a desire for security or gain, to cupidity, rather than to a desire for justice and freedom

which he sees as the objects of the true liberal. This is how he explains the origin of Babeuf's "conspiracy", in the malaise of Thermidorean reaction:

> Ils sentirent que, s'il restait un moyen de ranimer la masse abattue, muette, c'était de lui offrir une immense proie, telle qu'aucune n'eût été encore présentée à l'avidité d'une multitude affamée dupuis quinze siècles.[29]

This great "prize" - the abolition of individual ownership, the equal distribution of wealth, the ideal of pastoral self-sufficiency - was an "Eldorado", a "mirage in the desert", without substance and without future, and whatever flicker of response it may have briefly aroused in the population soon subsided in the general apathy.

More "revolutionary", in fact, is the spirit which is moved by ideas rather than wants. Integrity, consistency and sincerity are greater political virtues for Quinet than mere effectiveness; he dismisses practical achievements almost as readily as material ambitions. He makes frequent reference to the efficacy of exile in keeping a sacred cause alive. Mme. de Staël's defiance of Napoleon, her refusal to accept the very minimal conditions imposed upon her return to France, excited his earnest admiration. Those Jacobin conventionnels who, he was informed by Baudot, remained unrepentant in exile, more loyal to Robespierre's memory than they had been to his regime, earned his praise. He

refers often, if somewhat obliquely, to his own exile and the entreaties of friends he had resolutely withstood at the cost of their patience and his own ease. His strictures upon those who would compromise their principles by reconciling with the enemy, the better to defeat it, probably reflect the bitterness and frustration he felt at seeing former colleagues enter into discussion with the regime of Napoleon III.

A great disillusion, Quinet suggests, followed upon the discovery, after 1800, that civil liberties and material benefits were no substitute for lost political freedoms. "Egalité", under Napoleon, was an empty charade, an ideal mocked by the steady stream of counts and dukes from his court. In their hopelessness, men took refuge in imagination and there resulted a plethora of utopian political visions. These were essentially illiberal, however, writes Quinet, founded on "geometric" systems, hostile to the individual and to nationalist sentiment and so to the modern world. In fact, like those other French philosophers who sought comfort for the soul in medievalism, these utopian theorists, in resisting the achievement of all history, the liberation of the individual, were essentially backward looking. Their industrial apocalypse was full of "monsters of the past":

> En vain ils s'élanceraient pour concevoir les formes de la société future. Là où elle est déjà en germe, ils la méconnaitraient longtemps; et la contradiction qui fait le fond de leur vie apparaîtrait jusque dans leurs rêves. Leurs plus hardis utopistes, Babeuf, Buonarotti, Saint-Simon, Fourier auraient peine à sortir des cloitres de Campanella. Ils traceraient l'apocalypse de l'avenir industriel; cette apocalypse serait pleine des monstres du passé.[30]

Experience rather than intuition or reason should direct men's political exercises, Quinet believes. He points to America as a sort of laboratory for the testing of political theories and ideas, unhampered by tradition and habit. There, liberty has produced a society which seems to indicate that man's natural inclination is towards private enterprise and ownership of property. Quinet further suggests that lacking such liberty and the vitality it produces, France and Europe may find themselves overtaken and supplanted, just as a free and vibrant Greece shook off the influence of a decadent near Eastern civilization.[31]

Quinet's ideas on religion and morality comprise a great portion of La Révolution, because, as he frequently insists, no political reformation can be complete or enduring without accompanying spiritual reform. This has been demonstrated by events in America, Holland, England and Switzerland, he writes. In each of these nations, political revolution was accompanied and assisted by a vigorous Protestantism and its "modern spirit".[32] But in France,

religious reformation was not carried through because the Jacobins were infected by Rousseau's teaching, in Profession de foi du vicaire savoyard, that familiar religious institutions are best preserved for the comfort of the masses in a time of questioning and doubt. It was an idea, Quinet writes, which not only instructed revolutionary leaders in hypocrisy but led them to believe that inward change can take the place of external, visible reform: "... qu'il suffit, pour renverser l'ordre moral, de changer les individus sans toucher à l'institution."[33]

Rousseau, Quinet asserts, advanced a mistaken form of religious toleration that produced only immobility in theology and philosophy. In suggesting that all religions are of equal value in serving the undeniable spiritual needs of humanity, he undermined the cause of moral progress. That people were eager for change, Quinet claims to discover in the "spontaneous" attacks on monasteries, altars, bell towers, and sacred relics that accompanied the dechristianization movement. While Quinet does not admire the vulgarity and idolatry of Hébert's and Chaumette's Cult of Reason, which was more a matter of redecoration than reform, he writes, he sees a certain appeal in the vitality of the popular movement contrasted with the cold discipline

of Robespierre's Cult of the Supreme Being.[34]

Religious practice, for Quinet, was never a matter of observance of forms but a direct and personal communication with the universal. It explains his hostility to both Revolutionary cults and Catholicism and yet his sympathy with the impulse that created or upheld them. In attacking the influence in education of the Roman Catholic Church, he was not so much condemning the principle of religious education as insisting that whatever spiritual instruction was offered be compatible with independent inquiry and a liberal political outlook. His long and discouraging struggle with the Church and government in the 1840s convinced him that the real issue in education was not a political one, involving the mediation of competing claims of Church and State, but a philosophical one. Only a completely secular instruction which offered, in the principle of freedom, a new basis for moral unity could rise above sectarianism and help heal the divisions that plagued France.[35] He did not, like Michelet, come to see in the Revolution a replacement for Christianity, a faith in itself, but he did share his conviction that common political aspirations and commitments were best built upon some unifying belief, some perception of the absolute.

France, he believed, had lost this spirituality in

abandonment to eighteenth century "Voltairism" or to Catholic formalism. After the Revolution, in the profound disillusion that followed vanquished political hopes, there existed in philosophy and literature the same withdrawal from reality which characterized political theory. Senancour's Obermann and Chateaubriand's Génie du Christianisme represented for him the two poles of the literary spectrum: at one extreme, world-weariness and lassitude among those disciples of eighteenth century philosophy who saw its weakness revealed; at the other, a reactionary Christian mysticism and absorption in the past. Lacking are those ideas which engender action. All innovation, he writes, was in matters of style - in form and in colour - because here the terrain is "commodious"; style contravenes none of the conventions and challenges none of the commonplaces or obligatory sentiments which have characterized the intellectual world since the Revolution.[36]

Just as Quinet saw society diminishing, after 1795, from a vital whole into small, rigid interest groups, so he saw the intellectual world dividing along class lines, each stratum possessing its own set of preferences and prejudices, fixed in torpor, and justifying its inactivity by reference to deterministic theory:

> Quand l'homme tombe, il se trouve toujours un système pour l'encourager à tomber davantage ... . Redevient-il esclave? La théorie annonce qu'il est fait pour l'esclavage. Cesse-t-il de penser? Elle déclare que sa nature est de végéter. S'endort-il? Evidemment, il n'a point d'âme.[37]

The French had put aside or suppressed the truth all-important to Quinet, that the individual is responsible for his own acts and can and must make of his life what he will. But without an example before them of those "grandes actions qui remettront l'homme à sa place", how, asks Quinet, can the French regain their faith in free will?[38]

If France, after the Revolution, offered little encouragement to the contemplative spirit, Germany was, by contrast, an inspiration. Defeat and conformity did not, there, deter men in the formulation of "audacious" ideas; those of Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, he writes, changed the moral world.[39] At a time when the French turned to the natural sciences, seeking there the certainty which had eluded them in political theory, the Germans "rebuilt" the spiritual world and retained a basis for moral principles which the French abandoned. Quinet's continuing admiration for the German idealists of the early nineteenth century suggests that the aggressive nationalism of his younger days had been tempered somewhat by the repeated failure of France's "civilizing mission" and the ambivalence with which he now viewed its revolutionary tradition. Yet

there is still, in La Révolution, sufficient expression of faith in "la nation" and "le peuple" to establish him as a patriot, albeit a defensive one.

The French, he asserts, were not naturally belligerent or repressive; conquest was a passion of the Latin temperament. Though the invasion of neighbouring countries during the Napoleonic era was indeed rapacity disguised as benevolence, the blame for such aggression lies with Napoleon and his "Byzantine" heritage. The revolutionary army was not so infected; created from the levée en masse, its energy and will derived from the instinct of the people. Its aim was truly to liberate. The victories of 1793 and 1794, he continues, were attributable not to the Terror but to the art of war. The military genius of such as Turenne and Frederick the Great was now revived in the people, who perfected the tactics of innovation and movement and the use of the massed column as opposed to the extended line. The great numbers of ordinary conscripts lent their enthusiasm, self-reliance and sense of purpose to the army and to the defeat of invaders. The élan of the people is not to be confused with militarism, he adds. So long as commitment to the Revolution and its principles was nurtured, militarism gained no hold in society. Only under the Directory, when respect for law and civil authority waned, did the people

lose this unique "héroïsme" and begin to place military ends above political ones.[40]

Though Quinet admits the performance of the French for sixty years after the Revolution was lamentable, he does not completely despair of their capacity for regeneration. He places his faith in the continuing existence of high principle and moral example, tenuous but not extinct in France. The people slumber but they are not inert. They retain, in themselves, hope for the future, "leaven for tomorrow's bread".[41] Though the Revolution ended in tumult and failure, he believes in its eventual triumph and the inevitable transformation of man and society. Just as stone itself is metamorphosed by chaos, so too, will the individual be re-formed by the historical process:

> Fût-il plus endurci que le granit, il suivra aussi sa voie. En dépit de lui, il faut qu'il suive cette ascension de l'univers, à laquelle le rocher obéit en secret jusque dans les entrailles du globe.[42]

Quinet ends on a note of rather poignant defiance; he has sought the truth and kept his word. Others may not see in his circumstances triumph but he is content.[43]

Footnotes to Chapter IV

[1]*La Révolution*, I, 464.

[2]*La Révolution*, II, 590.

[3]*Ibid.*, p. 187.

[4]*Ibid.*, p. 176.

[5]*La Révolution*, I, 386.

[6]*La Révolution*, II, 521.

[7]*Ibid.*, II, 480.

[8]*Ibid.*, p. 199.

[9]*Ibid.*, p. 519.

[10]*Ibid.*, p. 517.

[11]*Ibid.*, p. 93.

[12]*Ibid.*, p. 182.

[13]*Ibid.*

[14]*Ibid.*, p. 183.

[15]*La Révolution*, I, 189.

[16]*Ibid.*, p. 238.

[17]*Ibid.*, p. 239.

[18]*La Révolution*, II, 628.

[19]*La Révolution*, I, 235.

[20]*La Révolution*, II, 481.

[21]*Ibid.*, p. 22.

[22]*La Révolution*, I, 239.

[23]*Ibid.*, p. 236.

[24]*Ibid.*, pp. 241-42.

[25]*Ibid.*, p. 233.

[26]*La Révolution*, II, 521.

[27]*Ibid.*, p. 140.

[28]*Ibid.*, p. 200.

[29]*Ibid.*, pp. 456-57.

[30]*Ibid.*, p. 606.

[31]*Ibid.*, pp. 611-13, *passim*.

[32]*La Révolution*, I, 248.

[33]*Ibid.*, p. 136.

[34]*La Révolution*, II, 146.

[35]Jacques Pochon, "Edgar Quinet et les luttes du Collège de France, 1843 - 1847", *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France*, a. 70, no. 4 (juillet-août, 1970), p. 627.

[36]*La Révolution*, II, 559.

[37]*Ibid.*, p. 563.

[38]*Ibid.*, p. 564.

[39]*Ibid.*, p. 560.

[40]*Ibid.*, p. 416.

[41]*Ibid.*, p. 630.

[42]*Ibid.*, p. 632.

[43]*Ibid.*, p. 633.

CHAPTER V

"La Révolution": Its Place in the Historiography of the French Revolution

Revolutionary historiography, by the time of the publication of La Révolution, was undergoing significant change. The influence of Romanticism, which produced "apocalyptic" explanations in history, was waning. Positivism and the impressive development of German scholarship contributed to a growing emphasis on a "scientific" approach to the investigation of the past. A greater degree of specialization, with a resulting decline in the popularity of syntheses or general histories was combined with a more professional methodology, the mandatory use of original documents and more exhaustive research. In the philosophy of history, the attempt to understand the whole of human history, to discover universal laws of progression and change, disappeared and was replaced by a less ambitious concern for the nature of historical knowledge.[1]

Quinet's work was almost immediately relegated to a past era; its philosophic assumptions, sweeping purview and polemical style made it unacceptable to the scholar; its political judgements, too severe for republicans, too tolerant for conservatives, made it unattractive to the reading public. After the initial flurry of debate in 1865

and 1866, it was little read and seldom referred to. Its almost immediate disappearance into an oblivion inevitably described as "profound", obscures the fact that in some of its views, it touched upon issues of interest and importance, issues only recently revived in revolutionary historiography.

To understand what is unique and valuable in Quinet's La Révolution, one must consider its contemporary context. Throughout most of the nineteenth century, the dominant tenor of histories of the Revolution was liberal. Certain themes connected the works of Thiers, Mignet, Lamartine, Michelet, Tocqueville, Quinet and Aulard: that the ancien régime was insupportable, that the Revolution was the expression of liberal principles, that France was the instrument of liberal advance and the bourgeoisie its agents. Divergence within this stream arose from the question of whether or not the Revolution was to be considered as a "bloc", an event to be accepted whole, or divided into periods of ascent and decline, "liberty gained" and "liberty lost". Mme. de Staël and Benjamin Constant were among the first to voice this latter view.[2] Gérard and Furet suggest that the necessity of defending the Thermidorean reaction contributed to this first campaign against Jacobin excess.[3] In the histories of Thiers[4]

and Mignet[5], however, the Revolution was accepted in its entirety, its radicalism regretted but deemed inevitable, necessary to the defense of revolutionary gains, an unavoidable response to circumstances created by counter-revolutionary activity. Restoration historians generally were influenced in their views by a desire to uphold the Revolutionary heritage while exorcizing its Jacobin bogeymen and so make palatable to the public their agitation for reform and the removal from power of the Bourbon dynasty.

Thiers and Mignet were no disciples of the Jacobins; they upheld the interests of the bourgeoisie and its claim to be the true founders of the Revolution and liberty. Mignet blamed the aristocrats for provoking the violence of the Terror. He did not see in it any positive economic action or social programme but only a defensive reaction. Thiers presented the Revolution as a patriotic rising of the bourgeoisie. It was a "myth", states Gérard, to which liberals reverted throughout the rest of the century: " ... réaliste et patriotique mythe bourgeois et national, sans messianisme aucun."[6]

Romanticism and the Revolution of 1830 added new elements to the liberal view of the Revolution. Disenchantment with the increasingly conservative and self-centred Orleanist regime, which, in Gérard's phrase,

attempted to "appropriate" for itself revolutionary glory,[7] soon inspired historians like Buchez, Carrel, Michelet and Lamartine to focus on the role of "le peuple" and, correspondingly, to view with greater favour the radical phase of the Revolution, 1793-94. Romanticism, too, after 1840, tended to promote more radical interpretations in its emphasis on drama and sentiment which translated, in historical writing, to admiration for the heroic ardour and "instinct" of the people. The Romantic predilection for universal truths, whether metaphysical or material, fostered the idea of the Revolution as part of a grand design, in which France occupied a unique place. These "messianic" interpretations of the Revolution were bolstered by the growing strength of nationalism and the Napoleonic legend, which also drew upon Romanticism and thwarted democratic aspirations. As Jacques Barzun writes:

> The government of Louis-Philippe, too little conscious of the nation and of its democratic base, fostered by reaction the glorifying of national unity through the memory of its last popular embodiment - Napoleon. And this in turn led to the intensification, through history, of a militant nationalism fearing its counterpart across the Rhine.[8]

Another contribution of the Romantic era to revolutionary historiography was the first appearance of socialist interpretations. Cabet's Histoire populaire de la

Révolution française (1839), Buchez and Roux' forty volume compilation of documents and commentary, L'Histoire parlementarie de la Révolution française (1834-38), and Louis Blanc's L'Histoire de la Révolution française (1847-62) are notable examples. None of these, however, as Gérard points out, offered the detailed economic analysis upon which later socialist histories were founded. In these, the conflicting interests of the bourgeoisie and the people were still presented in "moral" terms: the idealistic populace versus the "egoistic" bourgeoisie. Even Louis Blanc's history defined the working classes in terms of their emphasis on "fraternity" as the basis of political organization rather than their espousal of any basic principle of economic reorganization. In linking the Jacobins to an anticipated socialist future, Furet argues, Blanc was thinking more of the Jacobins' concept of government, that is, a strong central authority "at the service of the poor", than of specific economic policies.[9]

It has been suggested by several writers that Romantic historiography, in its emphasis on fraternity and national purpose, represented an attempt to rise above the divisions and disappointments which the July Monarchy, rather than eliminating, only added to. Lionel Gossman, in an

interesting article on the historical writings of Augustin Thierry, points out that dialectical and teleological views of history served to overcome the apparent irrationality and discontinuity in human affairs by "domesticating" them, that is, by incorporating them into a larger scheme of orderly advance.[10] Gérard concludes her account of Romantic historiography with a similar assessment:

> On peut donc dire que l'histoire romantique parvient à étudier la controverse: avide d'unanimisme, elle remplace les faits par leurs symboles, la critique par le pathétique, les problèmes par des solutions verbales. Pour le passé, tous concluent à une amnistie générale.[11]

The events of June, 1848 and December 1851 gave pause, however, to many liberals. Revolution seemed doomed to end in violence and despotism. "Fraternity" no longer seemed to offer the same promise of harmony; conditions for the survival of liberty became a more pressing concern. This is evident in a work of Alexis de Tocqueville, L'Ancien régime et la Révolution, published in 1856, which sought the causes of failed liberalism in the institutional traditions of France. The allure of the Napoleonic legend faded and the Romantic vision of an heroic, impassioned populace gave way to misgivings about a manipulated mob. The remnants of republican liberals were now in disarray, discredited by the events of 1848, seeking means to re-invigorate their cause, divided as to the means.

It was in this context that Quinet's La Révolution appeared. It was immediately perceived by some as a threat to what hopes could be entertained for concerted action within the republican camp. It was condemned as a betrayal of the Revolutionary heritage and a gratuitous boost to counter-revolution. It was a major factor, too, in the gradual but lasting estrangement between Quinet and Jules Michelet. Michelet lamented Quinet's fall from grace. In an exchange of letters with his old friend, he accused Quinet of neglecting to acknowledge his own, earlier work or heed his conclusions:

> Seul, en ce travail de 7 ans, j'avais exhumé la révolution des archives. Je ne dis pas cela par une sotte vanité, mais pour marquer ce surprenant oubli de celui qui seul avait frayé les voies.[12]

Michelet's petulance masked deeper objections to Quinet's pessimism, to his emphasis on past failure rather than promise for the future, a pessimism which in Michelet's view only gave strength to the enemies of the Revolution. Michelet's concept of the revolutionary heritage differed from that of more radical republicans, however. Far from considering it embodied in the work of the Jacobins, he eulogized the people, glorified the grandes journées of 1789, 1791 and 1792, and all evidence of popular initiative: "Mettre cet océan dans la petite enceinte du cloître jacobin!" he wrote in the preface to the 1868 edition of his

history, "Vaine entreprise".[13] Though this particular remark was directed at Louis Blanc and his championship of Robespierre, Michelet's insistence upon upholding the unity of "la grande Église" applied equally to Quinet's work. Michelet was not merely writing figuratively when he referred to the revolutionary heritage in such terms. It was in their respective religious views that Michelet and Quinet diverged most markedly. Michelet had moved so far from the Church and institutionalized religion as to see in the Revolution a new "revelation" of justice and fraternity.[14] Quinet, however, though never less hostile to Roman Catholicism, retained a sense of the religious sentiment as something distinct from mere ideological commitment:

> À quelque moment que je considère l'histoire de cette Révolution, il n'en est aucun dont je voulusse éterniser l'esprit, parce qu'il n'en est pas qui contienne et realise en soi l'idéal de vérité dont j'ai besoin. Elle a tendu, d'un effort sublime, à embrasser le divin; elle s'en est approachée en des instants suprêmes; mais enfin, elle n'est pas la Justice, l'Evangile éternel, la Religion absolue.[15]

In Michelet's view, to withhold full allegiance to the revolutionary heritage was to deny the truth incarnate in the Revolution. Michelet's objections were raised in private correspondence; others were less reticent. Quinet's history received considerable attention in the major journals of the day, and though much of it was favourable,

such as the reviews in Le Temps, Le Siècle, and La Revue des deux mondes, a significant portion of it was hostile. Louis Blanc, for example, felt moved to respond, in Le Temps of February 22, 1866, to Quinet's repudiation of the Terror, repeating, again, the argument that it was a necessary response to "prodigious peril".[16] Louis Delescluze characterized Quinet as a "vieux pleurard".[17] It was Alphonse Peyrat, however, who launched the most vigorous and sustained attack upon him. In a series of articles published in the winter of 1865-66 in L'Avenir national,[18] Peyrat, a leading figure among the democrats, condemned Quinet's work as a "satire contre la Révolution". He felt compelled to respond to Quinet, he wrote, not because his ideas merited attention but because they had been accorded too much. It was Peyrat's purpose to defend the origins of his party and uphold the principle of raison d'état, the right of the state to enact extraordinary measures in times of extreme crisis. Such a crisis existed, he argued, in the year 1793 and he expresses astonishment and outrage that Quinet could dispute the need for a strong and decisive administration or disparage its achievements and effectiveness. The Committee of Public Safety was a response to particular circumstances, he continued. To suggest that it represented a "fatal submissiveness" is to

avoid real issues and fall back upon royalist rhetoric. He rejects Quinet's contention that the Robespierristes wanted to make of the Terror a "system"; rather, he states, they considered it always a temporary, if necessary expedient. Peyrat spends much time describing the scientific and technological advances made during the Revolution, citing expanded knowledge in geography, engineering, astronomy and medicine, improvements in agriculture and domestic sciences, the manufacture of new products and so on, to challenge Quinet's assertion that "la Révolution ne vaut pas ce qu'elle a couté".[19] Peyrat also condemns Quinet's suggestion that the Revolution ought to have proceeded more vigorously against the Roman Catholic Church. Though he agrees that rather than attempting to fuse the two powers of Church and State, the revolutionaries ought to have separated them and thus rendered ineffectual the temporal influence of the Church, Peyrat considers Quinet to have taken this line to a ridiculous extreme, which exposed in him a far more tyrannical disposition than existed even in Robespierre. But it was Quinet's attack upon the Jacobins and the principle of "revolutionary government" which most roused Peyrat's ire. The Jacobins, not the Girondins , he writes, were the true revolutionaries:

> Tant que les Jacobins ont dans les mains les destinées du pays, tout cède à l'ascendant de la

> Révolution, la France marche de victoire en victoire; quand les Jacobins ne commandent plus, ne donnent plus l'exemple et l'impulsion, la désobéissance, l'indiscipline et le découragement se mettent dans les armées; nous éprouvons partout des revers. La Révolution s'arrête, recule.[20]

Jules Ferry, in Le Temps,[21] responded to Peyrat's criticisms because he felt they represented the opinion of a narrow, dogmatic sect within the democratic party which had failed to realize that the conditions no longer existed which had inspired jacobinism. It began as an "instrument of war", he writes; after 1815, its continued existence was the "bitter fruit of war and defeat" but now democracy and liberalism were no longer to be denied. The time had come to strip the doctrine of "salut public" of its sanctity and reveal it for what it was, an attack upon liberty as dangerous as any from the right:

> La doctrine du salut public, c'est la liberté subordonnée: de quel front osez-vous vous plaindre qu'on la subordonne aux principes conservateurs, si vous la subordonnez vous-même aux nécessités révolutionnaires?[22]

It was the virtue of Quinet's history, Ferry argues, to have made this point his central thesis and to have made a connection between the acceptance of "salut public" and the acceptance of Imperial despotism. He applauds Quinet's championship of the Girondins, long neglected and much maligned by historians from Thiers and Buchez to Michelet

and Louis Blanc. Far from being weak and ineffectual orators, as they were so often portrayed, they promoted with vigour and ingenuity the defense of France and the creation of a republic. To Peyrat's challenge that proof be offered of Jacobin "acquiesence" in the coup d'état of 18 brumaire, Ferry responds with a long list of names:

> Les noms obscurs de la grande Montagne foisonnent dans l'Annuaire. Jean-Bon Saint-André, Alquier, Cavaignac, Saliciti, Cochon de Lapparent, pour ne citer que les plus marquants, se casent dans les préfectures, s'étalent dans les ambassades. Albitte, un pur celui-là, un proscrit de Thermidor; - Fréron, illustre mitrailleur; Borje, Thirion, Drouet, passent, de proconsuls, sous-préfets ou juges, tandis que les partisans de Marat, les Hentz, les Parnis, les Bourdon (Léonard) mangent dans de petites places, dignes de leur médiocrité, paisible, le pain de la bureaucratie impériale.[23]

Ferry is annoyed by Peyrat's efforts to disclaim such men as "tainted" by Thermidor, not "true" Jacobins. By this reasoning, Ferry asserts, only Robespierre, Saint-Just, Couthon and their followers in the Commune were "pure". What Peyrat fails to see, in Ferry's view, is that the act of 9 thermidor, if not the corrupt faction, "dite de Thermidor", was a reversion to the principles of liberty and justice which the Revolution embodied; it was the Terror, not Thermidor, which initiated the long descent to despotism and militarism:

> ... cessez alors de pleurer sur le 9 Thermidor. Oui! le sentiment républicain et les intérêts

> révolutionnaires défendaient la République au dedans, les armées produites par le grand mouvement de 1792 suffisaient à la protéger au dehors. Voilà nos vrais vainqueurs. La guillotine n'y était pas plus nécessaire que le sabre, et si la Révolution pouvait se passer de Bonaparte, elle n'avait pas non plus besoin de Robespierre.[24]

Quinet was eventually moved to respond to the controversy not, he insists, to defend himself or his views - he is content to let posterity be his judge - but to offer reassurance to those who, possibly confused by the debate, "désirent se fortifier dans le sentiment de la vérité".[25] Quinet is perhaps overly sanguine in his conviction of right but he does make some just observations about dogma versus truth. He begins by insisting upon the Revolution as a "human" rather than a "supernatural" event and so subject to the critical eye of independent, dispassionate inquiry. He rejects any attempt by a group of "savants", such as that represented by Peyrat, to dictate correct belief:

> Il nous serait impossible de reconnaître à un groupe d'hommes quelconque, fussent-ils les plus sages des hommes, le droit de marquer, d'imposer ce qu'il est permis de croire et de ne pas croire, de penser, ou de ne pas penser touchant la Révolution.[25]

In depicting the heroes of the Revolution as fallible individuals, not "geometric" images, and in judging events and policies on their merits, not their proposed function, Quinet claims to be departing from the abstract, the "convenu", and offering the factual, the "scientific". To

suggestions that he is undermining the "solidarity" of republican orthodoxy, he responds that such consensus comes only at the cost of conscience and truth. Sectarianism has no place in historical writing, he states, and he confidently asserts the triumph of this view:

> Ne s'enchaîner à aucune faction, ne s'inféoder à aucun homme du passé, n'être ni feuillant, ni girondin, ni jacobin, ni dantoniste, ni robespierriste, mais être homme et humaniser l'histoire; rendre justice à chacun selon ses oeuvres; tout subordonner à la vérité, à la liberté, voilà la voie nouvelle.[26]

Quinet was only partially right in predicting the advent of "scientific" history. Certainly the influence of positivism and the retreat from Romanticism led to less ambitious contemplation of the past, to a search for specific factual knowledge rather than meaning in history. Monographic studies predominated over surveys, the generalist gave way to the specialist, the man of letters to the professional historian. In this sense, "scientific" history, though of a sort not at all to Quinet's taste, did supplant the "philosophic" histories of his own day, including his own. That detachment, that absence of partisanship, which he claimed for himself and which, in his view, constituted a scientific approach, was not to become a distinguishing feature of subsequent histories. If anything, orthodoxy became even more marked within both the

republican and the counter-revolutionary camps. From Aulard and Taine flowed the two major streams in Revolutionary historiography - through Jaurès, Mathiez, Lefebvre and Soboul on the one hand, through Cochin, Madelin and Gaxotte, on the other - that continued to reflect strong ideological commitment.

Quinet's plea for an interpretation of the Revolution unfettered by doctrinal considerations went largely ignored in France until fairly recently. American and British scholars, most notably Alfred Cobban, some years ago expressed dissatisfaction with the tendency for ideological allegiances to influence historical research in France. In his provocative essay of 1964, The Social Interpretation of the French Revolution, Cobban argued for an abandonment of all-encompassing sociological theory as a basis for or guide to historical inquiry. Marxist historians have broadened the scope of inquiry and amassed data which deepen our understanding of the Revolution, he writes, but the ideological framework within which they work is far from being scientific or unassailable, as they contend. Though critical analysis requires reference to broader concepts than mere chronological ordering of events, Cobban suggests that these be confined to a specific and precise terminology, a "vocabulary", such as that which has served

well economic theory and economic history.[27] He then goes on to demonstrate the complexity and changeability of "social categories" in the years before the Revolution and how this militates against the use of simplistic terms and generalizations which Marxist analysis encourages, specifically the notion that the Revolution represented the clash of a capitalist bourgeoisie and a feudal nobility. The work of other American historians, George Taylor and Elizabeth Eisenstein, has lent support to the argument that elements of the bourgeoisie and nobility were, in fact, indistinguishable in terms of their respective economic interests for as Taylor pointed out, most of the wealth of the bourgeoisie derived from property and acquired seigneurial privileges, rather than from capitalist ventures. Marxist concepts of bourgeois and proletarian revolution, related as they are to industrialized society, simply do not pertain to the complex, evolving pattern of economic and social structures in late eighteenth century France, these scholars argue.[28]

In France, François Furet and Denis Richet[29] have more recently issued their challenge to the Marxist school, in a debate, largely with Albert Soboul, that at times has descended to the level of invective. Furet and Richet contend that the Revolution owed as much to intellectual

ferment as to economic conflict, that far from being in utter opposition, elements of the bourgeoisie and nobility were united within an "enlightened revolutionary elite", and that the radicalism of 1793-94 represented a distinct and aberrant phase of the Revolution, a "dérapage", as the Jacobins were drawn reluctantly by their sans-culottes following into conservative economic policies at odds with their basic liberalism.[30]

Furet and Richet emphasize the gradual transformation of economic and social structures and the continuity of institutions and elites and tend to downplay the element of sudden and dramatic conflict in 1789, so characteristic of Marxist interpretations.[31] The perception of dramatic conflict was characteristic also of most interpretations of the nineteenth century. Furet is drawn to the conclusion that if the period 1789-95 was less revolutionary in fact, it must have been "revolutionary" in temper to have left so profound an impression of change. He describes this "revolutionary consciousness" as characterized by a changing view of the nature of political power, from the idea of power placed in a monarch to the idea of power placed in a "nation", a people.[32] The struggles of the Revolution, he concludes, were not clashes of material interest but arose

out of the completing claims of groups to represent "popular will".

Furet's more conservative approach leads him naturally to an interest in Tocqueville and, to a lesser extent, in Quinet. Furet admires Tocqueville's perspicacity in discerning the survival, after the Revolution, of the administrative organization of the ancien régime and the existence, before 1789, of patterns of landholding which have often been deemed a redistribution of property attributable to the Revolution. He sees something of the same insight in Quinet's work, though accords it not so high a place:

> ... il a aperçu quelque chose de fondamental dans l'histoire de la Révolution; quelque chose que seul Tocqueville, dix ans avant, et avec un génie analytique supérieur au sien, il est vrai, avait mis en lumière et s'était promis d'étudier: à savoir que la Révolution brise et continue l'Ancien Régime dans le même temps.[33]

Furet considers Quinet's work a fairly significant departure from earlier liberal histories which presented the Revolution in terms of dramatic social transformation with the sudden emergence of the bourgeoisie. He approves of Quinet's emphasis on a political transformation which the Revolution attempted to effect, that is, its re-definition of the nature of political authority:

> Le problème de la Révolution n'est plus pour lui, comme pour les historiens de la Restauration, la

> victoire d'une nouvelle société ... . Le problème est que la Révolution n'est qu'accessoirement à ses yeux la victoire d'une société, puisque cette victoire était de toute façon inscrite dans l'évolution; elle est le triomphe d'un nouveau pacte social et politique, fondé sur un nouveau rapport de l'homme au pouvoir où le citoyen remplace le sujet, et la liberté l'autorité.[34]

Furet also applauds Quinet's attack on the "complacency" of socialist historians who confidently assert the higher claims of ideological necessity, to the detriment of justice, liberty and truth: "Ce commentaire de Quinet pourrait avoir été écrit hier," he writes.[35] Indeed, though he finds Quinet's theory on the Latin origins of the traditional submissiveness of the French people little other than absurd - a "fable" - he senses in Quinet something of Tocqueville's insight into the dangers of a concept of authority or power unleavened by a commitment to individual liberty. Where Quinet falters, however, in Furet's view is in his too cursory analysis of revolutionary government and his careless equation of two distinct political concepts, absolutism and despotism. His eagerness to equate the temper of the ancien régime and that of the Terror led him to ignore, writes Furet, that which was new and specific to the Jacobin regime. He contrasts Quinet's generalities with Michelet's detailed examination of the means by which the Jacobin Society "reconstituted" revolutionary power,

transforming a once spontaneous, widespread sentiment into a mechanistic and centralized institution through the scrutiny of its members, doctrinal orthodoxy, a network of affiliated clubs, and the manipulation of an elected Assembly.[35]

Quinet's La Révolution, then, is not without interest for contemporary historians despite the fact that it is, to a great extent, derivative and eclectic. Quinet's idea of two revolutions, in 1789 and in 1793, the former progressive, the latter retrograde, appears in the writings of Madame de Staël and Benjamin Constant. His suggestion that increasing radicalism throughout the Revolution was related to provocative action of the court was first advanced by Thiers and Mignet. Quinet's faith in the "instinct" of "le peuple", his admiration of its revolutionary élan, owes much to Michelet just as his doubts about its competence in the exercise of political power owes something, perhaps, to Tocqueville. In Tocqueville, too, Quinet found support for and clearer expression of his own belief that the Revolution had not constituted so radical a break with the institutions and "spirit" of the ancien régime as most of his contemporaries were inclined to believe. He echoed Tocqueville in asserting that the continuing inclination of the French to defer to authority constituted a particular danger in the context of democracy

for it threatened "de produire d'immenses démocraties serviles qui graviteront incessamment vers l'arbitraire d'où elles sortent et où elles rentrent, pendant que la vraie démocratie libre prendre son expansion dans les vastes déserts inconnus de l'Amérique du Nord."[36]

Regarding the similarity of many of their ideas, Jacques Pochon, after studying Quinet's manuscript notes and letters, states that Quinet was well acquainted with and eagerly incorporated into his own writings some of Tocqueville's research and conclusions. He utilized, for example, Tocqueville's discovery of significant land ownership among the peasantry by the end of the eighteenth century to support his thesis of inexorable material change and civil reform. Similarly, Tocqueville's statement about the relatively close resemblance between the nobility and upper bourgeoisie on the eve of the Revolution lent itself to the support of his argument that the night of the 4th of August merely acknowledged a levelling well under way.[37] Pochon adds, however, that the themes to which such borrowings were applied were Quinet's own. In Le Christianisme et la Révolution française, published in 1845, Quinet had already stated his conviction that Catholicism remained, throughout the Revolution, a potent if unacknowledged source of that principle of unity and

centralization which re-asserted itself so malevolently in 1793.

If Quinet's work was, as one critic described it, "something more than and something less than a work of history,"[38] it is nonetheless still worthy of consideration today. Furet, however controversial his views, has helped to focus attention on a political conceptualization of the Revolution. To Quinet, also, can be attributed a similar insight in conceiving of it primarily as the clash of raison d'état and individual liberty.

Footnotes to Chapter V

[1]Charles-Olivier Carbonell, Histoire et Historiens: Une mutation idéologique des historiens français 1865-1885 (Toulouse: Privat, 1976), p. 157.

[2]Alice Gérard, La Révolution française, mythes et interprétations (1789 - 1970) (Paris: Flammarion, 1970), p. 27.

[3]Ibid., p. 26; François Furet, "La Révolution sans la Terreur? Le débat des historiens du XIXe siècle", Débat, no. 13 (1981), p. 41.

[4]Adolphe Thiers, Histoire de la Révolution française, 1823-28.

[5]Francois Mignet, Histoire de la Révolution française, 1824.

[6]Gérard, op. cit., p. 36.

[7]Ibid., p. 39.

[8]Jacques Barzun, "Romantic Historiography as a Political Force in France", Journal of the History of Ideas, II, no. 3 (June, 1941), 329.

[9]Furet, op. cit., p. 44.

[10]Lionel Gossman, "Augustine Thierry and Liberal Historiography", History and Theory; Studies in the Philosophy of History, XV, no. 4, Beiheft 15 (1976), pp. 29-31, passim.

[11]Gérard, op. cit., p. 45.

[12]Quoted by Bernard-Griffiths, "Rupture entre Michelet et Quinet à propos de l'histoire de la Révolution", Romantisme, no. 10 (1975), p. 149.

[13]Jules Michelet, Histoire de la Révolution française, III (Paris: Jules Rouff, n.d.), lix.

[14]Bernard-Griffiths, "Rupture", p. 154.

[15]Quoted by Bernard-Griffiths, "Rupture", p. 154.

[16]Louis Trenard, "Quinet, historien de la Révolution française", Visages de l'Ain, XXX, no. 150 (1977), 32.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Re-published, with additional commentary, as Alphonse Peyrat, La Révolution et le livre de M. Quinet (Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1866).

[19]Peyrat, op. cit., p. viii.

[20]Ibid., p. 208-9.

[21]Articles edited and re-published as Paul Robiquet, ed., Discours et opinions de Jules Ferry; Publiés avec commentaires et notes par Paul Robiquet, T. I: Le Second Empire - La Guerre et la Commune (Paris: Armand Colin, 1893).

[22]Jules Ferry, in Robiquet, op. cit., p. 102.

[23]Ibid., p. 116.

[24]Ibid., p. 121.

[25]Edgar Quinet, La Révolution; précédée de la Critique de la Révolution, I (Paris: Hachette, 1905), 8.

[26]Ibid., p. 39.

[27]Alfred Cobban, The Social Interpretation of the French Revolution (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), p. 16.

[28]Gerald J. Cavanaugh, "The Present State of French Revolutionary Historiography: Alfred Cobban and Beyond", French Historical Studies, VII, no. 4 (Fall, 1972), 592-94, passim.; and R.R. Palmer, "Polémique américaine sur le rôle de la bourgeoisie dans la Révolution française", Annales historiques de la Révolution française, a. 39, no. 189 (juillet-septembre, 1967), 369-80, passim.

[29]François Furet et Denis Richet, La Révolution française, 1965-66; and François Furet, Penser la Révolution française, 1978.

[30]Geoffrey Ellis, "The 'Marxist Interpretation' of the French Revolution", The English Historical Review, CCCLXVII (April, 1978), p. 363ff.

[31]Ellis, op. cit., p. 365.

[32]Keith Michael Baker, "Enlightenment and Revolution in France: Old Problems, Renewed Approaches", The Journal of Modern History, LII, no. 2 (June, 1981), 283ff.

[33]Furet, "La Révolution sans la Terreur", p. 50.

[34]Ibid., p. 45.

[35]Ibid., p. 54.

[36]Quoted by Furet, Ibid., p. 50.

[37]Jacques Rochon, "Quinet lecteur et utilisateur de Tocqueville" in Edgar Quinet, Ce Juif errant, p. 137.

[38]Alessandro Galante Garrone, quoted by Jacques Godechot, op. cit., p. 165.

CONCLUSION

Edgar Quinet's political message, his criticism of that habitual submissiveness which led the French people into too ready an acceptance of authority and fate, was not well received in France. Many professed their admiration of his resolution and commitment to principle but few followed him into so strict an adherence to personal conviction. Quinet chose to interpret his isolation as a measure of the indifference or neglect accorded the idea of personal freedom, which was to him the essence of life itself:

> Si je suis quelque chose au monde, je suis un esprit de liberté. C'est là ce qui fait tout mon mal et me rend la vie impossible en tant de lieux. C'est à cause de çelà que je déplais à tant de gens dans le monde. Etouffez en moi cet esprit par lequel je vis, et je souffre.[1]

Quinet wrote these words in some bitterness, no doubt, but perhaps with some justice also. Others, before and since, have remarked on the tendency of the French to accede to the notion of raison d'état at the expense of personal liberty. Tocqueville observed the effects of three centuries of increasing administrative centralization, which, he wrote, eroded the spirit and strength of traditional social groupings, destroyed that fellowship and sense of community which fostered confidence and independence, and reduced men

to dependence on the State, with no greater concept of liberty than that which saw freedom as merely an equal degree of restriction.

Furet echoes this view to some extent in writing that the principle of absolutism remained intact through the Revolution, that the "absolute" power of the monarch, in the ancien régime, was translated, during the Revolution, into the "absolute" power of the nation, the people.[2] Philosophic liberalism, founded upon a belief in the sanctity of individual conscience and opinion, could not, in such circumstances compete or survive. Furet and Tocqueville attribute its weakness to the influence of enduring institutions and the weight of historical precedent. Roger Soltau offers another explanation: that liberalism was discredited by its association with the social and economic conservatism of Orleanism and was simply disregarded in the polarized political debate which followed 1848.[3] Soltau also gives some credence to the idea, advanced so vehemently by Quinet, that Roman Catholicism, in its emphasis on the inviolability of authority and received truth, discouraged independence of thought or act.

Gerald Cavanaugh is more circumspect; he suggests that the political inexperience of the French made them less able, in the nineteenth century, to pursue objectives beyond

civil reform, in contrast with the English whose long exercise of political power prepared them for an earlier attainment of full "citizenship" comprising political and economic guarantees as well as civil equality.[4]

But if Quinet's conclusions can find support in those of other scholars and critics, it still remains to ask whether the premises on which they are based are valid. The existence of a single, unifying truth by which history might be ordered and understood, the primacy of systems of belief, the equating of moral progress with increasing individualism are ideas to which Quinet clung with an unwavering and uncritical determination. It was this same certainty and vehemence which reduced, also, the effectiveness of his role in contemporary politics. It is ironic that the most vocal of his supporters in the controversy over La Révolution, Jules Ferry, became a prominent figure in the Third Republic, while his harshest critics, Alphonse Peyrat and Louis Blanc, almost alone stood with him in 1875 in opposition to its consolidation. Ferry, in a sense, turned Quinet's condemnation of dogma aganst him by demonstrating that republican goals might be as well served by compromise as by intransigence.

In the end, La Révolution stands not as a work of history or sustained political analysis but as a source of

certain insights and some enduring wisdom. Quinet's description of a necessary and ineradicable sense of self, the gift of past ages to modern man, strikes a very contemporary chord:

> Que ce don heureux ou fatal que m'ont fait les siècles, le sentiment énergique d'être une personne distincte, me soit enlevé, je serai alors chose légère. Je ne porterai plus l'empreinte d'aucun temps; j'aurai perdu le sérieux, en même temps que le poids de l'existence. Je me promènerai à la surface des choses humaines, vide de substance, d'espoir et de douleur.[5]

Self-knowledge, he believed, carried with it a responsibility to act, to exert upon political affairs, the force of example and leadership inspired by personal principle and conscience. In upholding a political philosophy which stresses moral imperatives and individual responsibility, Quinet offers a doctrine not so much hostile to modern ideologies or oblivious to their social concerns as beyond them. He reminds his readers that at the heart of political debate is the question of whether truth is to be imposed or upheld. It is a salutory reminder and few have proffered it with such single-mindedness and conviction as Edgar Quinet.

Footnotes to Conclusion

[1]Quinet, La Révolution, II, 605.

[2]Baker, "Enlightenment and Revolution", p. 285.

[3]Roger Henry Soltau, French Political Thought in the 19th Century (New York: Russell & Russell, 1959), p. 61.

[4]Cavanaugh, "The Present State of French Revolutionary Historiography", p. 605.

[5]Quinet, La Révolution, II, 605.

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